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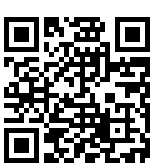

The GHOST of GALLOWS HILL

STANLEY HART CAUFFMAN

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OF GALLOWS
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ART CAUFFMAN

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LOOK ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS JACKET

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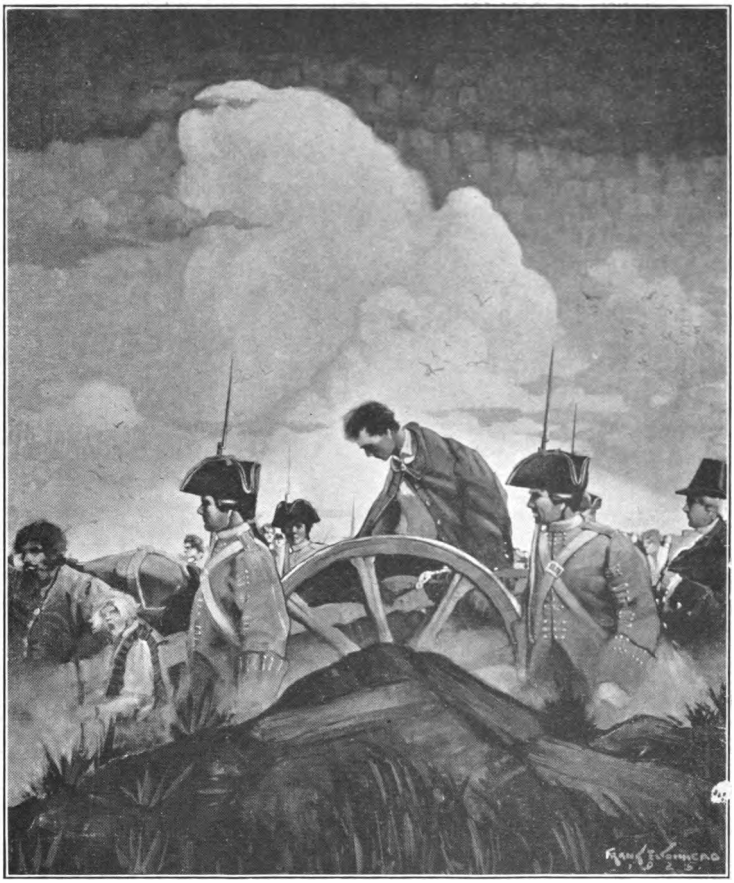

ON THE CART CROUCHED THE SOLE PASSENGER.

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THE GHOST OF GALLOWS HILL

BY

STANLEY HART CAUFFMAN

AUTHOR OF

AT THE SIGN OF THE SILVER SHIP

FRONTISPIECE BY

FRANK ELTONHEAD

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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The Ghost of
Gallows Hill

MADE IN THE U·S·A

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To

MY WIFE

"Like the tinkling of soft cymbals
and the wail of the shepherd's flute,
like the fall of a plashing fountain
and the sough of the Summer wind,
her name came then a melody
to wrap about my heart."

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THE GHOST OF GALLOWS HILL

CHAPTER I

The Specter is Conjured

ALTHOUGH my parents had been married, and indeed most happily, this quarter century, I don't believe old Amos Littleton ever put aside the hope that some day my beautiful mother might come to realize the error of her choice, and turn at last to him. Not that he depreciated my father! None could, much less a man of such discernment and lack of prejudice as Lawyer Littleton; but when my mother at eighteen was the toast of fashionable Philadelphia (Nancy Leedon she was, and your grandmother can tell you all about her — or better still, perhaps, your grandfather), Amos Littleton, already an attorney of repute and a good fifteen years her senior, knew love for the only time in his long life; and stepping aside when the prize fell to dashing Jack Sloan, proved himself a better man for the experience, if not a happier one.

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In my parents' early years of marriage they kept open the old Sloan Mansion in the City proper, and there "Uncle Littleton," as I called him, came a constant visitor, with kindly humor and keen argument, and sugar-plums to keep me dreaming o' nights; but when my grandfather Sloan died, and we moved up the Delaware to Riverview, he came less frequently — and still less — until I had but a dim recollection of him, except for his birthday guinea which he never forgot. It therefore came as a surprise when, after I had completed my term at the University at Princeton, that he should write and suggest I visit him a while in his rambling old house in Philadelphia, with the thought of my reading law under his guidance, and becoming a counselor myself.

Immediately I was fired with the idea. I was an only child, and both my parents hesitated to let me go from them for long, thinking me less the man than I really was. Yet, while there was no actual necessity from a monetary outlook for my doing anything at all, being the sole heir to my grandfather's estate, my father rightfully disliked a waster; and it was therefore decided that I should pay the lawyer a visit, and if all was satisfactory from our respective viewpoints, I would 'prentice to him in the following Autumn.

Thus, well mounted and accoutered, with raiment which was rich and modish, and vision still more opulent and expansive, I tipped with a silver shilling the

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ferryman who bore me over the river, and rode away to my ultimate fate as gay and free as any bridegroom.

Yet how could I else? It was the month of May! The May of 1769 it must have been; and the soft wind blew and the warm sun shone as only the wind can blow and the sun can shine in May — when you are twenty-three. I was bound for the Town! That alone was an adventure of a sort; for though I had lived there as a child, and had come and gone many times since with my father and mother, some years had passed without a jaunt but to the college, and now I was my own master. True, I thought at moments of my purpose thither, and then already saw my name upon a silver plate on the door of the old Sloan Mansion down Third Street:

WORRELL SLOAN
Attorney and Counselor-at-Law

But for the most part it was the holiday which held my thoughts: the ventures in the busy streets, the sports and horse-racing, the routs, the balls, the play-going, the gaming and the merriment.

All nature smiled upon me. Birds sang; blossoms budded; brooks trilled over silvery stones beside the way. Jolly farmers gave me kindly greeting, and red-coated King's men saluted my approach. Tradesfellows bade me the time o' day, and pretty country wenches dropped their eyes demurely as I passed,

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blushing a rosy red to be caught looking after me as I turned in the saddle to seek a last glimpse of their charms. It was indeed a holiday — that May, when I was twenty-three!

Now, with the sheer joy of life and health and youthful spirits, my horse and I turned after a time from the dusty beaten road, and when we had gone by Frankfordtown made through the woods which lies toward the City, that we might haply meet adventure on the way. Here all was calm and still — a new delight, wherein I drew sweet breaths of perfumed Spring, and where my mount trod the crisp earth daintily. All about was the whisper of new blooms, stimulated by the glow of the morning as it pierced the fragile canopy of budding branches, as warm and tender as the glance of your mistress seen through her tumbled hair. Here the sun was gilding a knoll of russet leaves — now withered; there, touching a fairy ring to vivid green; stopping to coax a modest flower by the wayside, and draw the fragrance from a bank of ferns. How wonderful it was! How fair! Could there be sorrow on a morn like this? Could any suffer, and the day so bright? I put aside the thought. It could not be.

As further I rode the trees grew sparse, houses appeared now and again; while, timed to the season of earth's awakening, there rang forth the music of a sledge and anvil, far enough aside from where I strayed to chime like a merry bell tuned with the harmony of

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all about. Children romped on the paths and mead now, as light of foot and sweet of voice as the fairies who had played here the selfsame games till the sunbeams had driven them again beneath the fresh green leaves. It was in May — the May of life, and of desire!

So, as I came forth again into the beaten track which led to the Town, whose roofs and spires I could now count before me, I detected a din and a racket upon the road which suggested the commotion of many people. And this sound being directly between me and my destination, and thinking it some pleasurable excitement, I spurred on my steed to come upon it the sooner, and in this was most successful as the clamor was also moving, although in a more leisurely pace, to meet me.

First I espied a cloud of dust, through and within which moved many figures. Figures of men and youths for the most part, ragged and fearsome, men of coarse and vicious aspect, who cried out in brutish voices either to one another, or to the rider in the lumbering equipage about which all surged and circled as it rumbled falteringly along; children (alone begat by such as these), who screamed foul cries, and cavorted madly in appreciation of this pageantry.

Drawing well to the roadside, when I discovered that this evidently gala occasion was scarcely the festal procession I had anticipated, I gave all my attention to

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learning the motive of this outpouring; and was rewarded by a close view of what seemed the center of all regard — although the purpose or meaning was not entirely clear even then. There was really little enough to look upon: a low, two-wheeled cart with heavy shafts, on one of which squatted in comfortless attitude the driver of the mean chariot. His horse, a dingy gray, plodded the rutted road with hanging head, and seemed depressed at what his waggon bore. Beside the cart, two on each side, marched soldiers — their polished guns and shiny black cues making their soiled red uniforms the more rusty. Directly behind the waggon there strode a stout, red-faced man, wearing a tall hat of office, a dirty blue coat (evidently purchased when he was less gross, and now buttoned to the bursting-point), and surrounded by a general atmosphere of dignity, importance, and liquor.

On the rear of the equipage crouched the sole passenger — a gray-faced, dusty-haired man in dull garments. His head hung down upon his chest, rocking and rolling with each jolt; and so little attention gave he to his surroundings that but for two short lengths of rope binding his hands to rings on each side of the cart, he would have pitched to the ground more than once. He rested — if the word could be used in this connection — upon a blanket, while over his stooped shoulders was flung, and secured by the top button, his coat — cloakwise, for his arms were not thrust

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within the sleeves. And ever about him there danced and cried and grimaced the motley throng; but of this he seemed unaware.

It was but natural that I should wonder, and make inquiry of those the less rabid who formed his escort as to the meaning of this turmoil; but little or no information was forthcoming until I finally leaned from my mount and grasped by the shoulder a tall, one-legged fellow who was hopping and floundering along with the aid of a stout crutch — panting with his exertion to keep up, yet screaming like the rest. He gave me a dangerous look as I arrested his progress, and shouted back at my question in a tone he had evidently used since joining the procession, — a shrill shout, —

"It's Matt's Johnny! It's Matt's Johnny! They got him Thursday last, and now he's goin' a-kickin'. It's Matt's Johnny! Hi! Stealin' and hidin' has done for y'u, Johnny! Hi! Hi!"

And he made an effort to loosen from my grasp.

"Wait" said I. "I don't understand you. Wait!"

But with this he gave my horse a sharp blow on the pastern with his staff, and limping away with unexpected agility as I released him to calm my plunging steed, he slunk among the rearguard of the dismal throng. Thereupon turning, and waiting until all had passed, I fell in behind this procession, for I wished to learn just what fortune held for Matt's Johnny.

The journey was not a long one. We had scarcely

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passed the spot where I had emerged from the sweet wood upon this very roadway, when a low hill rose directly before us. Up to its brow we went; and there, facing out upon the way that we had come, stood two upright posts joined by a beam at the top. Directly beneath this beam the cart was drawn to a standstill.

Up upon the waggon climbed the high-hatted official. From the pocket of his blue coat he produced another short length of rope, and this he slipped into a ring upon the beam — measuring the length upon his own figure, and testing its strength most dexterously. Then bringing forth a clasp-knife he cut the bonds which held the hands of Matt's Johnny to the cart, and raised him, with the aid of the driver of the vehicle, up upon his feet. Being seated upon my horse well above the heads of the throng, all this I saw very plainly.

Now it would seem that first Matt's Johnny looked dimly out upon the world which he was doomed to see but little longer; and then he turned, and spoke a word into the ear of the official. That worthy stooped and handed to his prisoner the coat which had just rested upon his shoulders, but had fallen from him as he was dragged to his feet. First the latter pointed with shaking hand — upon the wrist of which still dangled the severed rope — out toward the City behind me, from which he had thus been led. The gesture seemed

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to embrace the bright green fields and new-turned loam; the trees which clustered by the tinkling brook and raised soft plumes against the bright blue sky. It seemed to indicate the burnished sun, the clouds which floated in the welkin's depth, a bird which darted through the lustrous air — and then he fumbled with his tattered coat, and the man in the high hat motioned for me to advance.

So amazed was I in being thus summoned that I remained motionless while many eyes were turned upon me, until a soldier pushed his way through the gathering to my side, and bade me know that the hangman would have a word with me. Thus following close upon his heels, I rode my horse beside the standing cart.

"Is this the man?" asked blue-coat of his victim, pointing at me.

"It is," said the other, although he scarcely looked upon my face.

"Out with it then," said the executioner, "as I, for one, won't linger here. Speak to the gentleman, and be quick!"

So addressed, the condemned man turned his deep eyes upon me, still fumbling with his dilapidated coat.

"Some nights ago," said he, in a hoarse, listless voice, "I robbed you as you walked through the Square by the Market Place. Your watch and your hanker I

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sold; but this bag o' tobacco I kept — and now I'm givin' it back to you. My father's name is Matthew Wells, as all know here. He is the farrier. I beg you pray for me."

And so speaking, he drew out of the lining of his coat a cloth bag, about the size of your hand or larger, and made to pass it to me.

"Hold there!" cried the red-faced official, and snatched away the pouch to open the top of it and look within. "Rappee!" he snorted in disgust, as he fingered the contents of the bag. And tossing it to me with scant ceremony he again grasped his prisoner; but I raised my hand in protest, holding the gift again toward Matt's Johnny.

It was on my tongue to cry, "This is not mine! You have mistaken me for another! I have not been by the Market Place these three years!" But a look upon the face of the condemned bade me pause. I can not describe his expression, and yet it stilled my tongue as though I had been stricken dumb. Straight now he stood, nor flinched when the noose was slipped upon him. I and the rest were forgotten. His gaze was turned toward the heavens. He seemed to look into the very eyes of God Himself.

I turned my nag, and stumbled through the jostle down the hill. As I wheeled I heard the cart go rumbling on a score of yards — and stop. About me all were standing open-mouthed, but still. A shuddering

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sigh rose as I reached the road again. I took a last look back. And then, with the vision of that swaying jerking thing ever before my eyes where'er I looked, I spurred along the highway to the City — clutching tight in my frigid fingers the offering of the dead.

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CHAPTER II

I am Haunted by a Dream

AMOS LITTLETON was a King's man. No stancher Tory ever lived to damn a Whig than he; and I heard more politics and policies debated and propounded, more talk of tax and tea and trouble at one dinner in his house than I would have heard in my own home in a long year. This was naturally so, as Philadelphia was a hotbed of dissension at the time, yet it was in my host's blood to argue, as it was in his heart to stand by King George III just as he had stood by the Second George at the battle of Dettingen in '43 — for Uncle Littleton had worn an officer's coat as well as a lawyer's wig, you must know.

He was a middle-sized man with a graceful bearing, and a manner as charming as it was sincere; still his ideas were firmly outlined, and it was as well, while you partook of his hospitality, to go his way, or have an excellent reason for the deviation. His house was as large and as aristocratic as his clientele, and his means evidently ample. He dined well, and wined better, but sparingly, from a cellar which was the envy of many of greater wealth but less discrimination. In all he made a delightful host.

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His dwelling, on Sassafras Street, was presided over by his housekeeper now of many years standing, Mrs. Bergen, who, on my arrival, caused me slight embarrassment by assuring everyone within hearing that she would never have recognized me as the little terror who used to smear himself with jam and drag the cat about by the tail. She welcomed me, however, quite as heartily as her master, when he heard of my arrival and hurried from his office at one side of the wide hall to greet me. I was immediately stowed away in a great room in a great wing of the great house; and when I came to retire I was almost lost in a great bed, to arrive at which a short pair of steps was necessary.

My first dinner there — at four on the afternoon of my arrival — seemed like to turn into something of a function in my honor, as the dining-table revealed five plates set for Mr. Littleton and me; and no sooner was I ushered to my place when I must learn that I was but one of four guests enjoying the lawyer's hospitality. The first to whom I bowed proved to be an elderly lady of prim and placid demeanor, — a Miss Katz. Later I learned from Mrs. Bergen that this guest had begun her visit some twenty years before, but still felt that the graciousness of the invitation had in no manner diminished. Next to her was soon seated a stout and rather carelessly dressed gentleman, some older than our host, who discoursed in a very lively and voluble fashion — laughing very heartily at the lawyer's witty

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sallies, and still more heartily at his own. Master Puncher — Master Joshua Puncher — I also later understood, pre-dated Miss Katz as a gratuitous lodger some several years. When pressed as to the reason of their long stay my informant, the housekeeper, assured me that she knew no more than I, although stating as her belief that Mr. Littleton had been unsuccessful in securing for them moneys unlawfully withheld, and had housed them out of pity and chagrin at his professional failure. I thought it a dangerous precedent to support those in whose behalf your legal efforts had proved unavailing, although its insistence might increase exertion very generally throughout the calling.

One chair at my left remained untenanted during the entire meal, although I noted Miss Katz give a glance now and then in its direction, and shake her head and sigh.

When the others had separated to their respective duties or diversions, and Mr. Littleton and I were seated alone together in the library, I recited to him the tale about Matt's Johnny; and he hearkened with interest and an ominous shaking of his head.

"It's the old story," he said, when I had finished. "Evil association! I've known young Wells, and his father too, for years. The lad fell among thieves, and went the way of all weak flesh. It will be a sad blow to the blacksmith; although older men — men like him and me — can foresee the certain end of all such folly."

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"Do you know of his crime?"

"No. Something serious evidently."

"Not serious enough to thus die so young. It seems a terrible waste of human life to hang such a man, regardless of what his error may have been. It is unbelievable that he could not have been taught to realize, and even amend, his mistake."

"Who would have taught him? You?"

"If there was none more worthy to volunteer."

"The law may seem hard to you, and death is always dreadful to the young; but the reformation of those criminally inclined is a sorry task. Also, do not fret over the waste of human life. Quality is considerably more desirable than quantity, here, as elsewhere."

"If you do not think of the man himself, at least something you first said suggests regret for his father's suffering. Is it right that the law should make the innocent to grieve, and no opportunity to allay their pain other than keeping green a mound above the dead?"

"Those who grieve the most are usually the most at fault. I said that it would be a shock to the blacksmith, and it will. But it was he, after all, who might have set the boy in a fair way to escape these influences which eventually led him to the rope. Understand, I do not criticise or censure the father! God knows, I have shown myself too poor a guide to point scorn at any other; but after all, if a parent, with his

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natural affection and understanding for his own, was unable to check an evil course, who, think you, would have made a success of it? "

"You generalize. Before me hangs a concrete case. I cannot believe that this man was wholly bad."

"No one, Worrell, is wholly bad. Johnny Wells may not have been even morally bad. The point is that he was legally bad. That is one of the great arguments against reformation. A criminal is usually a fool as well. If you wish to be wicked I can tell you of a thousand outlets for villainy for which there is no legal punishment. The weakling, such as this poor fellow of whom we speak, is stupid and unimaginative in his vices. With greater vision he would sin with greater care. With greater vision still — he might not sin at all."

"At least the opportunity for an increase of understanding is denied him now."

"I cannot admit that for a moment," said the lawyer, decisively. "The very act which cut him adrift from this poor old world cut him adrift from his narrow views as well, surely. Save me the horror, I beg, that we must all bear our prejudice and ignorance beyond the grave."

"I will save both you and myself a horror by trying to forget the entire occurrence as soon as I reasonably may."

"Meanwhile say nothing to Miss Katz regarding it.

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Poor Wells was, I remember, a favorite of hers some years back."

"Indeed! How did she know him?"

"Ever striving to do good, she kept a small school here at the house some time ago. The village children — almost a score I would think — took their first instruction from her. He was among them."

"Have you any theory as to why he gave me the bag of snuff?"

"No. But there might be a dozen reasons for that. Perhaps he thought that what he said was really so. You might have a double in the Town. Perhaps he did it to gain time — a few moments more of precious life. It is most likely, however, that he did it simply to cheat his friend Ketch of any profit thus to be gained."

"Ketch?"

"Surely. Jack Ketch, the hangman. Ever since our Saviour's garments were distributed by lot among His executioners, the clothing of the hanged goes to the hangman. It is an old and interesting custom, — older than our faith itself."

"Do you think he would have gone to all that trouble for such a prize?"

Mr. Littleton took the soiled bag gingerly, and stirred the coarse grains it contained with a prying finger.

"Rappee, or worse," he said. "Well, we cannot

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read the purpose of the dead now. But let this be a warning to you, Worrell. Bad company abounds in this — and in all cities. Shun it! Respect and uphold the law, even if at times it seems harsh and unreasonable. Don't be led astray. You noted an empty place at my table to-day. Do you know for whom it was laid? "

"No; but I wondered."

"For a young man whom I befriended — and who has disappointed me. I have made many mistakes in my life; but few, let me be thankful, in the placing of my confidence. Take Miss Katz for an instance. A wonderful woman, sir, legally plundered of a heritage. Her presence as an honored guest beneath my roof for a short time back has been a — a — a benediction, sir, upon my house! She is not a blood relation, but she was a bridesmaid at my mother's wedding. She doesn't look it though, do you think? "

I hastened to affirm that in the matter of years, if nothing else, Miss Katz was indeed remarkable.

"And you heard Puncher," he resumed. "Now, there's an extraordinary man for you! He also met with vicissitudes, but he bears up under them like a — like a hero! He's one among a million, sir. A wonderful mathematician and astronomer. In fact, I might go so far as to speak of him as an astrologer; although perhaps you scoff at that which modern trend regards as mere superstition? "

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"From what I have seen and learned of Mr. Puncher I know I can but respect any opinion he may hold."

"Very true. Also, very diplomatic! We must leave your concurrence in forecasting futures to a later date. Now as to the unoccupied chair at dinner, and its owner, Jasper Dean — one word. His father served in my command abroad. He was a bold and fiery Irishman, born to battle, and yet kindly withal. He died upon a field of blood and glory after I had given over the army. His son, motherless, and alone like myself, I sought for and brought here from an institute near Belfast. It was in my thought that he might resemble his father in all things, and that we might grow close to one another. He, or I — perhaps both — have made a dismal failure of this hoped-for relation. He has been with me four years now, and I swear to you I have tried to treat him as an only son. At first he was suspicious but obedient. Soon it would seem that the suspicion grew and the obedience diminished. I think that for some reason he never really liked me, and this I felt the more because there is a charm about the boy which sincerely drew me to him. I think perhaps that years spent in an institutional home which could show him no personal attention other than bare protection caused him to view my paternal advances with distrust. His pride, too — inherent to a dangerous degree in the best of his countrymen — made him loathe my charity as he had loathed that

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public charity at home. And yet it did not prevent his using all the wealth that I would give him, and more. Another thing, I must not forget that I have reached those years when what friendships cling about me are an ivy-like growth, long ago planted upon a personality which has since grown warped and crotchety through time. What new ties I can expect now must be in spite of, rather than on account of, my disposition. It was but natural that my affection should center strongly about him, for the remembrance of his father was strong within me, too. Frankly, he likes me not."

"May you not misjudge his attitude?"

"Unfortunately no. To me now he has grown a stranger, although he still dwells beneath my roof. To him, it would seem, I am an enemy. He claims that I frown upon all that he does! And, to be truthful, I do; for he seems possessed with a perverse desire to do everything on which I would naturally frown! He spends without earning, he boasts without accomplishment, laughs at my prejudices, ignores my requests, attacks my beliefs — and of late has shown an aptitude for low company, which worries me as much as all the rest of his misdemeanors together."

"And yet you still befriend him?" I asked.

"It may be that I put the case too forcibly before you. And yet I think a mild indictment could be secured on all these charges. Truthfully, he and I are

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far from accord, and both at fault; but it would seem the more natural and the more possible for him to come to my views, rather than an old man like myself should cast aside the lesson all my years have taught. I know — " and he raised his hand to still an involuntary interruption — " I know that there are arguments on both sides. There always are. He claims that my teachings are of the school of mistrust; that my association with matters legal have made me prone to weigh all questions by the puny scale of man-made justice. There may be truth in that! There may be truth in his assertion that, while I have struggled with pettifoggery, great issues have arisen — issues which have hurried the world by me as I stood mired by my disinterest and my dotage."

"You speak as though you were a thousand," I laughed.

"No. Jasper Dean speaks as though I were. True is it that while I may have some few years yet I am no longer young. But while I am aging, I claim that the world has never passed me by. To recognize the waters at your feet it is not necessary to plunge within the tide. Because a ship looks brave upon the ocean, because its canvas glows, its sailors sing, I would not place all that I have upon its deck, and sail away with hope of finding in some other land a wider, better life than I have here. Here then it is that Youth cries to be free; and here that Age recalls the wrecks which

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strew the sea. Three quarters of my life is likely done. Why should I leave all that I've built behind, hoping to reach some unmapped isle of dreams? "

"Would he have you take leave of Philadelphia?" I asked.

"He would have me take leave of my senses, I think," he replied, moodily. "Yet, when you chance to meet Dean, Worrell, look upon him with as unprejudiced an eye as you can muster after this outburst of mine. He is really a remarkably likable chap, and so handsome. The ladies all — Ah, come right in, Mr. Puncher! We were talking of Jasper; Worrell and I."

Mr. Puncher seated himself with care and comfort in a large armchair before replying to this cordial welcome. But after settling deeply, and inhaling a huge portion of snuff, he observed with decision and evident relish:

"Jasper Dean was born to be hanged! "

"Now, now, my dear Puncher," pleaded my host; "I don't think I would say that, even in a jest."

"But I'm not in jest! " insisted the gentleman addressed. "I am in absolute earnest. He was born to be hanged. I have cast his horoscope, and I know."

"No horoscope could possibly bring matters to such a termination," answered the lawyer; but Mr. Puncher took more snuff, and wagged his round head from side to side portentously.

"No horoscope will bring about any result, my dear

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sir," said he. "But it will forecast the future accurately, as well you know. It happens, however, in the case of the young man under discussion that we need no stars to tell us of his probable conclusion. There is much undreamed of in the proper use of horoscopy, Master Worrell, I can assure you."

"Even the stars may err at times," said Uncle Littleton.

"To conform with that doubt," said Mr. Puncher, after a thoughtful pause, "it was not the heavens, but your groom, Thomas, who told me, Mr. Littleton, that Jasper was again accompanied by that hussy from the gaol last evening at some low entertainment on the waterfront."

The lawyer stirred in his chair. "How did he know that they were together?"

"He was present at the festivities, I believe."

"I think, if I were you, Puncher, I would rely more on the stars and less on the servants," said the attorney.

"You don't believe it then?" mused Mr. Puncher.

"I don't want to believe it!" snapped the other. And then waving aside any lack of interest or doubt: "If Thomas was present he should know who the baggage is. She represents bad company, Worrell. Bad company! Did you learn anything further from him, Joshua?"

The reader of futures rolled his eyes ever so slightly in my direction as he hesitated to promptly reply, but

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I caught the glint as readily as did Mr. Littleton, and rose.

"I have some unpacking and rearranging of my clothes," I said. "If you will both excuse me, I will retire to my room for a while."

"No! No!" said the lawyer, although I had time to reach the door before he came to a decision. "I think you had best remain, Worrell. Mr. Puncher, either we must make our young friend here a confidant, or we must send him away with an unslaked taste of scandal which will reflect on us all. What Jasper Dean has done Jasper Dean must shoulder. You may know, Worrell, that for some several months he has given us little or none of his society, other than a meal or two and what part of the day or night he cares to waste in sleep. Naturally I am responsible for him, and interested in his habits. There is a woman in the matter. For over two months I have known that he was going about with this beauty in a way which reflects no credit on either. She is a poor influence over him, evidently. Some troopers' wench no doubt, eh, Puncher?"

"Well — not exactly, if Thomas is not mistaken; and yet her affiliation with the military seems unquestionable. I think I may surprise you, sir. The lady is the one — no less — who accompanied Colonel Broadfoot here!"

"Broad — ! Colonel Broadfoot? Impossible!

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Why, I sat to dinner with that trollop when he had the affontery to bring her to the Governor's table not three months ago. She's a — why, damn it all, Puncher, I know no polite name for her kind; though she's as handsome as Juno withal! "

"She danced with your esteemed jackanapes at a riverfront breakdown last night, it seems."

"Well," said Uncle Littleton, after a few moment's further thought, "perhaps this had better go over to another time. I am shocked, Mr. Puncher! What if the Colonel should learn of this? Did Jasper return here last night, do you know? "

"Miss Katz says not."

"Miss Katz would know. She has that gentle motherly instinct toward the wayward, and thinks more of the boy, I believe, than if he was a credit to us all. If it's not this woman it is more of that Sons of Liberty business, I suppose."

"What are the Sons of Liberty? " I asked.

"King haters! " the lawyer answered with a snap.

"Come," said his friend, soothingly.

"Idiots! " snorted the other.

"Now," warned Puncher gently.

"Is it a Society? " I inquired.

"It's a menace! " said the attorney. "A pack of clowns like Jasper are going to run this Colony, and put His Majesty in his place. No more taxes, no more quarterings for troops, no more duty, no more acts, no

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more laws, no more prisons or hangings or whippings or punishment. We are all going to skip and dance on the village green, hand in hand, through a long summer's day — by the way, Puncher, I suppose the Sons of Liberty have done away with Winter entirely."

"There's a lot back of it all," said the other, seriously, "but they don't get the right people interested. Can you imagine anybody trusting anything to a fellow like Jasper Dean? And yet to hear him talk you might think that he was foremost among them."

"You touched their weak point there, Puncher. The wrong kind of people are interested. Believe me, if I got up a petition to do away with prisons, prison-ships and gaols, I could get an alarming number of affirmative signatures to it in a very short time; but they would be the signatures of the wrong people. There is the weak spot right there, I tell you."

"There is this fellow in the South — Henry," I ventured. "From what I've heard he is coming out strong for this Society, or along these lines."

"Henry! Now who the devil ever heard of Patrick Henry until he begun his tirade on just laws? If there is anyone I have less faith in than a long-lipped New England Puritan, it's a long-haired howling Virginia farmer."

"How about a long-faced sour Pennsylvania Quaker?" asked Mr. Puncher, with a wink in my direction.

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"They are the very worst yet," said Mr. Littleton, "except perhaps a long-headed North Jersey Dutchman. My! My! My! Here I am, out of tune with the whole world again, and all because we began on that rascally Dean, and his Sons of Liberty. Let him hate his King! It's nothing to me. But let him be careful of his conduct while he holds his place in my home. By the way, Puncher; you are a great one to laugh at placing trust in him, after advising Miss Dale and me through him."

"I? Advis — ? I don't quite understand you."

"About the money. You know. Hark back a month."

"I still am in the dark," said Puncher.

"We will speak of it later," said Littleton. "Do you recall Wells, the smith, Puncher? Worrell tells me that his son was hanged this morning on Gallows Hill. I don't know the charge against him, but I will make it my business to find out. Smuggling, I have no doubt. His haunt was Willow Creek wharf, and right there lies a nest of them to cheat the King of his own."

"Yes," said the astrologer thoughtfully. "Yes. So Johnny Wells was hanged, was he? "

"He was. He gave Worrell a bag of snuff as a parting gift, it seems. Tell him of it, Worrell." So I related the tale again.

Mr. Puncher looked at the bag when I had finished, and stirred its contents; but even so great an authority

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on snuff could make no more of it than could we. The only suggestion original with him was the assurance that to sleep on any property of a hanged man was to dream truly of the future — the former owner returning in the spirit to claim the article, I understood, when you conjured the truth from him under threat of withholding what was sought. I was advised strongly to attempt the necromancy.

It was late when I finally retired; my first evening at Uncle Littleton's being spent over cards with the two gentlemen and Miss Katz. And after I had made my nightly preparations, and had safely gained the high old bed, slipping thankfully and comfortably between the sheets, I was impressed enough — or superstitious enough — to climb out again for the bag of snuff and place it under my pillow.

I slept promptly, and I dreamt of a great many things; but through all my visions was ever present poor Matt's Johnny a-swing as I had last seen him on Gallows Hill. He always seemed at my side — with the cord around his neck! — no matter how inappropriate the spot wherein my dream-wanderings bore me (and it is really remarkable how many inappropriate places there are to go escorted by a hanged man!), until at last I got him, or he got me, back again to the gallows on the hill. I was alone on the place of death before him now, it would seem, and I forced myself to look into his face. For a time it was the face of the

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farrier's son on which I gazed; and then it changed to another face, and another, until I seemed to look upon, one at a time, all the faces of the men who had swung on Gallows Hill — yet none, thank God, I knew. Now, finally, beside me there stood a strange grotesque counterpart of Mr. Puncher, who each time I would turn away from the condemned visage before me would take me by the neckband and twist again my head to look. And soon, of a sudden, this dream astrologer gave a most triumphant leer, and pointed to a new form gracing the noose.

"He was born to be hanged! He was born to be hanged!" he chortled ominously; and while the features before me were actually unknown, yet I recognized them as those of none other than Jasper Dean!

At this, assisted by a very vicious tug upon my neckband, I awoke with a start — to find that my dream friend was still pulling my head about. The room was in total darkness, yet in the gray outline of the window I saw distinctly the figure of a man bending beside my bed — his hand seeking beneath my pillow.

For what?

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CHAPTER III

I Meet a Contrary Spirit

THE man beside my bed was pulling gently but persistently at the neckband of my nightrobe in the possible belief that its drawing string was the cord of the bag of rappee under my head. What his reason or what his purpose I did not stop to ponder, however. Rather, I suddenly hurled aside the covers and made a leap from my eminence upon him, lashing out with a blow the while, which haply landed flush upon his chin and sent him reeling across the apartment.

It was as dark in the room as the inside of a pocket, but instinct led me to find him again with my fists; and after a short but energetic encounter he broke away, and my door slammed upon retreating footsteps down the entry.

I would have followed even there, for my temper was aroused, but he was evidently more familiar with the house than was I; so after I had searched for some time in vain for the door, and had been compelled to sit and nurse a bruised foot which had found a sharp corner of the furniture in the darkness, I decided a

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light was the immediate requisite, and felt for my steel and a candle.

Illumination showed me that the bag was still in my possession, and that the door had no bolt. I hung a chair on the latch so that it would surely tumble and give an alarm if my gentleman returned, and found by my watch that it wanted but a few minutes to two in the morning. I then took the precaution of concealing my timepiece in a table drawer, and was returning to bed, when my eye caught a glow of something white beside the entrance, and I picked up a small sheet of thin paper now crumpled into a crude ball and evidently dropped by the thief.

Resting the light upon the bed, I carefully smoothed out the clue to the raider; but the evidence was so brief and yet so decided that in a moment I had all the proof needed to identify him. What I had found was a few lines written by a lady. I say lady, because the writing, the text, and even a faint suggestion of subtle perfume lingering upon the paper, all bespoke refinement.

It ran thus:

To Mr. Jasper Dean,
Sir:—

Either willfully, or deliberately, you have misunderstood me. If I must speak more frankly, and with perhaps less kindness, blame not me, but your lack of discernment. There is not, nor ever can be, any possibility of my change of heart. What you undertake will be done alone for the cause which you

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espouse, — though none will welcome its success, and yours, with deeper joy and thankfulness than I.

Do not believe that I lack either trust or faith in you. I will meet you fearlessly as you suggest in the Tavern. The place is your selection but the hour must be mine — no later than eight of the clock on Wednesday evening. Remember, I will respect your confidence as you will regard my reputation.

CLAN

Folding the paper I placed it beside my watch in the table, and slept the remainder of the night without interruption. Rising early, I dressed with care, and begging a servingman whom I found in the hall to direct me to the apartment of Mr. Dean, I was pleased to discover that his door was also lacking a lock.

He was asleep when I softly entered the room; and closing the door gently behind me I stood above him as he lay, gazing into that face which had haunted me both asleep and awake the night just past. It was a fine handsome countenance, with high studious forehead, slender Roman nose, and a delicate mouth and chin. Perhaps with a tenacious jaw to better balance the imaginative brow it would have been a stronger mask; but the charm and personality there were evident enough, even before he seemed to sense my presence and opened his fine eyes of quick-roving laugh-seeking Irish blue.

The moment his lids lifted he rose to a sitting posture and made me a graceful obeisance. There was no

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dreamy lethargy, no half-consciousness, between his slumber and his thorough wakefulness. Animated, you could little associate anything so calm as sleep with Jasper Dean. Rather was he a disposition ever a-boil before the fire of his own intractibility.

"Good-morning," said he to me in a cheery voice which still smacked of the hills and fens of Erin. "Good-morning to you, sir — if it is morning? For I've been so damn'd irregular in my coming and going lately that I am not certain of the time of day — or of the day itself."

"Good-morning to you," I replied. "It is less than an hour after the dawn, Mr. Dean — you are Mr. Dean, I presume?"

"Jasper Dean, at your service, sir."

"Thank you. It is, then, an hour after the dawn of the day in May following the night in which you attempted to rob me."

"Sirrah!" he cried, struggling to emerge from the coverlets about him; but I sat me down quietly upon a chair at the bed-side, and raised my hand for silence and his attention.

"My dear Mr. Dean," said I. "Let us abridge this portion of our interview as much as possible. Surely it is mutually embarrassing. I have undoubted evidence that it was you in my apartment, even before I saw that bruise upon your chin; and to deny it will lead to endless discussion, wherein my proof must nec-

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essarily win over your protests. What I am interested in — and what drew me to you as soon as I might reasonably come without being suspected of the same — the same — indiscretion which characterized your late activity, — is, what may I have that you want? "

"What — ! "

"Come! I am not ungenerous! You broke in upon me; but you left me my watch, my purse, and my handkerchief — my hat, my boots, and my common sense. All but the last you could have gotten without my waking, but by rousing me you have near made me wear away this one poor treasure in speculation. What did you come for? What would you like of mine? "

"It was a joke," he replied, after a pause. "A stupid joke, which you will forgive I know, Mr. Sloan."

His smile was most disarming — most ensnaring; but I was not so easily appeased.

"It was a joke? " said I, with lifted brows.

"In the poorest possible taste. Yes."

I shook my head. "That was not just the answer I expected of you, sir; but if you assure me that that was all, — very good. I trust, under the circumstances, that you will take no offense at my early entry here, or at my words. My curiosity should now be allayed. For just a little while, though, I thought you might have sought the bag that Matt's Johnny gave me yesterday, ere he hung. That not being the case, how-

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ever, I will — with your permission, cast it into this welcome little blaze here upon your hearth — for the thing has occasioned me evil dreaming."

And drawing forth the soiled pouch from my pocket I made to toss it into the flames.

"*Wait!*" he cried.

Back I sat in my chair again, and carefully replaced the trophy in my pocket.

"You must tell me more of this little joke," said I. And thereafter I bent my gaze upon the tiny fire, and comfortably fitted the fingertips of my two hands together as an occupation until he would say further. I suppose he looked at me much during the long wait which ensued, but I did not embarrass him with a counter regard; and eventually he broke the silence with a very gale of sincere and hearty laughter.

"Now, by the blue waters of Lough Neagh, but you're a clever lad, Mr. Sloan, if you'll allow me to say so. Out for my confidence you are, and you shall have it or I'm not the scion of Rory O'Dean of Marcoo! Toss me the bag, now, and I'll show you a trick that's worth while."

"It will be the confidence first, if you don't mind," said I.

"Right enough," he answered. "But there'll be a bit of dry history about myself, unless you'll have been told how I came to be here at all."

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"I have been told that," said I.

"And you'll be knowing who my father was?"

"Yes. You are a son of a soldier — and you hate your King."

"That's giving the truth an evil twist," said he; "but let it pass. I know that it's Littleton's lesson you repeat, and not your own. My father died at the side of Wolfe at Quebec. Does your family show as great a love of country?"

"No, it does not. I spoke but what was told me. You will forgive me."

He nodded in a friendly fashion; and then, after a brooding silence, "I do not see things with my guardian's eyes. We drift apart further and further. In the course of a lecture he gave me last night when I returned he mentioned your experience of the morning. Now, I knew that same Johnny Wells, and when I learned that my usurper had —"

"Learned what!"

"Excuse my poor selection of words. When I learned that my supplanter was —"

"Sir!"

"When I was told, Mr. Sloan, that you were in possession, and likely resting upon this — relic; and could not possibly have the sentimental attachment for it which a dear friend would naturally feel for the last gift of a dying man, I — well, why continue? You know what followed."

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"So it was sentiment, then?"

"Yes. Sentiment only. We Irish are very sentimental, as you doubtless know."

"Is it possible, Mr. Dean? It is probably to be regretted, but we Sloans are most practical and prosaic. But likely you have already judged as much? Personally, I do not hold with too much susceptibility. It rather savors, to me, of a nature feminine — impressionable — sensitive. In short, Mr. Dean, if that is your reason for desiring the bag of snuff, why, I must admit to a distaste in encouraging your regard for one so mired in crime; and therefore, lacking a better reason, into the flame it goes!"

"That is not my sole reason," said he quickly, as I made a forward movement. "I still have the best to tell. You know, of course, that Johnny was a thief. And perhaps — who knows! — there might be a letter or some word hidden inside the snuff, telling where he has concealed some stolen treasure. Such things have been known."

"Do you really expect such a letter in this?"

"Well — not expect, exactly. No."

"Did he tell you he had hidden anything?"

"Wells? No."

"Did he suggest he had written such a letter?"

"No."

"Or that he might write such a letter?"

"No."

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"If he had done so, wouldn't it be addressed to you?"

"No."

"Perhaps it would be meant for you, however?"

"Oh, no."

"Are you certain of the note?"

"Bless us all, no!"

"Then why did you think it might be there?"

"Simply because such things have happened before, or so I understand. Don't despair. You will readily gain my guardian's favor. Your methods of cross examination are already almost identical."

"Thank you. But to return to the letter, and the writer. You and this thief, you know, were exceptionally companionable, I understand."

"Now, who said that? I scarce knew the fellow!"

"Not well enough to gain his confidence?"

"Hardly well enough to nod to him on the highway."

"That's strange."

"What's strange?" he snapped.

"That you know him so slightly."

"Must I be the confidant and boon companion of every footpad in the district?" he demanded.

"No, no! But you are overlooking your very sentimental attachment for his tobacco bag, are you not?"

I thought for a moment he might reach out from his bed and strike me in the face; but he changed in a sec-

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ond all to laughter again — sitting amidst the tumbled covers and holding his sides, while he threw back his head and roared very musically his fill.

"You will be the very death of me, Mr. Sloan. And, by the way, if you have a Christian name you can give me a hold upon it, for we are going to be the best of friends imaginable!"

"Worrell, it is, and very much at your service, sir. Now, if you have done your laughter let us on with our little explanation."

"Regarding what?"

"Your essay at theft."

He thought for a moment. "I wonder," said he finally, "did my guardian tell you that, not satisfied with the attempted direction of my tastes, modes, manners, religion, superstitions, politics, acquaintances and occupations, he did much to promote for me a love affair also?"

"He did not directly mention any love affair he was advancing."

"No? Well, he chose for me a lady, to whom I was to pay court. And being a dutiful orphan I did as I was bid — for a while. The match made little progress. Pre-arranged love-affairs seldom do, I believe; but I still hold the lady in sufficient regard to try and recover some jewelry which Johnny Wells stole from her."

"Do you know that he stole it?"

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"I am almost certain." He seemed to turn over much in his mind during that short sentence.

"Hence the letter in the snuff?"

"Correct!"

"Then let us look together at once."

He smoothed out the white bed-sheet over his knees, and carefully poured onto the linen a thin layer of the coarse tobacco. When it was all out, we spread it still thinner with our fingers. Nothing was hidden in the rappee. Nothing concealed about the bag at all. Jasper Dean turned it slowly inside-out, and shook the last few adhering crumbs from its rough lining. Then he handed it back with a shrug and a sigh of disappointment. I think we returned the snuff almost grain by grain; and when the bag was again filled as I had first received it, he pressed it into my hand with a rueful shake of his handsome head.

"You keep it as a memento of your first hanging, Worrell," said he, "for to me even its sentimental value has evaporated!"

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CHAPTER IV

I Am Haunted by a Vision

IT was not until I had returned to my room after breakfasting with Miss Katz that I recalled the letter I had found on the floor, and addressed to Dean. Being alone, I drew the fragrant little missive from my pocket, and read over its few lines again. Knowing them now by heart it was no breach of etiquette to look upon the bold clear penmanship once more. The name by which it was signed lured me. I think I had never heard it before.

"Clan," said I to myself. "Now, what sort of a person would fit to such an odd name?"

Some one whom Jasper now cared little for, evidently, as he had crumpled the letter carelessly, and having let it fall had never even missed it since. And yet, was it thoughtlessness which had crushed the note, or was it disappointment — or anger?

"Clan!"

I shrugged my shoulders. Dean was handsome and had ever a well-lined pocket. Likely there were many such *billet-doux*.

"Clan?"

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It had an Irish lilt, as had his own cognomen. And repeating the name over softly as I paced the room, I drew upon my imagination to picture a woman of the type to interest him. First, she must be all fire and intensity; tall and sinuous, and dark of course, with sloe-like eyes and sullen, tempting lips. I think it was a hint of perfume on the paper which sketched this vision in my mind. Then her voice was deep and thrilling, I was certain. Perhaps that was the unconscious association of the name Clan with clarion. And to finish the mental portrait, her raiment was strange, sparse, and seductive, with beads and brass and glistening gems; and in her ears green jade, which, when she moved in languorous grace, soft-touched her ivory flesh, or sunk beneath the shadow of her hair.

I wrought so wonderfully, with her letter to another in my hand, that being quite enamored with the fancy, I decided I would go for a walk in the street and perchance happen on such an one; so retouching an already careful toilet, I descended to the lower hall. First I made for the library to leave word as to my stroll, and there encountered Mr. Puncher dividing his attention between his snuffbox and a book.

"Good-morning!" he cried, on my entrance. "Sit you down for a bit of gossip, if you have already broken your fast this morning."

"Breakfasted? I have been up since almost daybreak. Miss Katz and I broke our fast hours ago."

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"There! That comes of country breeding. Ashamed to let the sun find you in bed, eh? I was that way when I was young; but age slows the effort, whether it's rising of a morning, love-making of a noontime, or keeping sober o' nights. You did not rise through lack of comfort, I trust?"

"Indeed no. Has my uncle put in an appearance as yet?"

"Amos Littleton? He's to his office on the other side of the house. Bless you, *he's* never late for his day's work. I'll wager there have been a score to see him already on one subject or another. I can tell you, Master Worrell, I take great pride in his progress, as is but natural."

Without knowing just why Mr. Puncher's pride should be involved in our host's legal celebrity I nodded to him sympathetically. Who can tell, perhaps he had predicted it all in the stars. He took more snuff, sneezed sonorously, and resumed, with a wave toward the apartments across the hall.

"Every day — except on God's day, court days, holidays, or other interruptions — he sits at his desk there at eight in the morning, even if it is dark winter, and he has to have a candle. And if you want to set your watch, sir, wait here until he comes forth again, and turn the hands to half after three. You won't be wrong a minute — no, nor a second, if you catch him just as the door creaks. There's order for you!"

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"There's system," said I, heartily.

"It's methodism, sir. Methodism! But that is where he is not always wise. Ah! You will know that when I drop a word of warning — or of criticism — it is meant in no disparagement of him? It is simply that at times he expects as much of us every-day mortals as he demands of his superior self. Take Dean, for an instance. Amos does not understand the boy; and there is not a doubt the lad misjudges his benefactor. I don't say, had matters been otherwise, that much could have been done with Jasper, for the adage of a silk purse and a sow's ear holds good here as elsewhere; but one says, 'You must!' and the other answers, 'I won't!' where a soft word or a gentle hint might gain the better. I mention this to you because your uncle is not unlikely to issue instructions to you in some matters. Remember, he was a soldier, and accustomed to command."

"He seems all gentleness to me."

"Of course he does. And he is! But keep you in his good graces. There is a girl in whom he is interested. Her father, now dead, was a lifelong friend, and she has won Amos as she has won us all. Not the interest that you might take in her, you understand, but just a wish to see her happily wed, that he may bless the union with, perhaps, some of his wealth. Would you believe it, (you and I, Worrell, are of the world and can laugh at some of his strange ideas and

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yet do him no injustice in our heart,) he commanded Jasper Dean to make love to the lady! Ordered him to do it! The result can be imagined."

"It was an insult to her," said I, warmly.

"Nay! Had the boy been left to himself he would have done nothing else; but with the thought of Littleton ever leaning over his shoulder leading him along, he grew as tongue-tied in her presence as he never was before with any woman."

"He mentioned something of it to me, and said that the affair had languished."

"Who mentioned it to you? Littleton?"

"No, Dean."

"And he told you the affair had languished, eh? Well, on her part it likely never existed, but on his — I have my doubts. Personally I think he was hard hit in spite of his denial. Well, so it is. If he asks you to pay the same young lady court, do you keep your wits about you, and win her straight away. She has beauty and wealth and — Hark! Did you hear a door open? Look you from the window and see who leaves from the main door."

I heard some one walking briskly down the hall, and peering through the closed sash facing Sassafras Street noted a man descend the marble steps of our house, and hesitate in the roadway in evident search of someone.

"He is a tall officer of the King's Infantry, with

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white skin and the blackest unpowdered hair. He would be handsome but that he has had his nose badly broken to one side. Do you know him from that description?"

"Surely. It is Major Broadfoot. Is he alone?"

"I think there is a lady with him, for he is motioning to two blacks to bring up a private chair. He is coming in again now."

"Ha! Is it so? A great blade with the ladies, the Major. His brother and he were sent from England to put an end to the smuggling in these parts some months ago."

"But I thought I remembered Uncle Littleton saying last night that Willow Creek was full of smugglers?"

"If he did, he said correctly. Willow Creek, and other places too. No; I can't say that the Broadfoot arrival has made much alteration in the cheating of the King over his taxes. In fact I have heard it said that it is safer to dodge duty now than it was before they came — if they share a bit in the profit. But likely that is just idle talk from those jealous of the boon these brothers have proved to our society, in their dancing and ogling and promenading in gay coats."

"Do you mean that the work of His Majesty is neglected, while they strut about — "

"Oh, I repeat too freely what I hear, doubtless.

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What, after all, knows an old fellow who idles away his time with the stars? Soldierly responsibilities and duties? Of them I know nothing. And our first thought should be for the ladies, should it not? There! They walk down the hall again. Who is the person with him, can you tell? "

I flattened my nose against the pane once more, so to speak, and saw the chair door thrown wide as the officer escorted his companion down the steps that she might take her place in the conveyance. The gay sedan was small, and the lady's skirt was so hooped and puffed and bulged and decorated that it seemed much larger than the entire equipage in which she must depart; but with astonishing agility and womanly grace — a flare of bright colors, and she was leaning from the lowered window of the closed chair door, smiling a farewell to one of our windows, (alas, not the one at which I stood!) her face alight with youthful laughter.

How sweet she was! How slight, how delicately precious! Her tapering hands, her slender arms — about the wrists of which black ribbons twined — her parted lips so red against the gleaming teeth, her dark arched brows, and eyes of tender brown! My heart near stopped, I think, that bright May morning — and when it beat again it beat for her alone. She smiled and blew a kiss to the window, I saw, while an amorous sun embraced her with his ardent beams; and from

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the glorious coronet of golden hair, which swirled about her flower face as swirls the gilded waters of some fairy brook about a lily nestling on its bosom, there stole a curl to rest upon her shoulder.

As in a dream I saw her escort bow, and the two stalwart chairbearers raise their light burden to depart. She waved her hand again, and with my face pressed close against the glass I watched the rhythmic swaying of her sedan until it turned and was lost in the traffic.

Five minutes before, and I was a happy, carefree young dog, a thousand interests stirring in my thoughts; and now I stood a hopeless slave, with but one craving dominant in my soul. Who was she? How might I reach her? How quickest could I lay my heart at her feet?

Of course she was perfect — faultless, flawless, exquisite! Having seen all that at a glance, there remained little more to do than go to her immediately and offer my fortune, which was considerable; and my devotion, which was boundless. My one regret was that my father and mother lacked at times the infallibility of my perspective, and might suggest a careful investigation of the lady and her antecedents; with other tedious catechetics as far from love itself as I was now far from reason. My uncle, too, might deem me precipitant; and no doubt Mr. Puncher would insist on casting her horoscope.

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My nose was still cold from resting upon the window-glass when I had decided that we would elope.

I knew well that I had existed upon this globe about twenty-three years as we measure time, and that I should have — and really was thought to have! — intelligence equal to the average. But also I realized that life had but begun for me a short five minutes before, (or was it three!) and I burst into the tender passion very much as I had originally burst into the world, — without previous meditation, and no enlightenment whatever barring an inherent pertinacity — but if I was headlong I was the more sincere; nor can I aught but commend myself if I but dream of the picture she made upon that morning in May, as she blew a kiss from the window of her sedan — to whom?

"Do you happen to know the lady?"

Gone was the perfume of the orange blossoms, the fantasy of tender meetings in some lover's lane, of strolling — she and I alone — some moon-lit glade. Gone, too, was the golden glint upon the day, as though the glow the sunlight kindled in her hair had lingered even when she'd gone away. Now was I back with Puncher and the world again; and there was something very temporal about Mr. Puncher even though he lived much with the stars. But my love for her had not faded nor decreased. Nay! It grew more radiant each moment!

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"I — I am sorry, but I do not know who the lady might be."

"What was she like?"

"Why, Mr. Puncher, she was — was —" Ah! the futility of words!

"Was it a thin little miss, with yellow hair?"

"Y-e-s, Mr. Puncher —" (I cry, High Heaven, justice upon him who, ever looking upward, miscalls an angel as she flutters by!) "— it was."

"With two niggers, and a leather chair?"

"Evidently the same."

"Ha!" wheezed Mr. Puncher, inhaling a prodigious pinch of snuff; "*Clarantine!*

. . . . . .

Clarantine! Clarantine!! Clarantine!!!

Like the tinkling of soft cymbals and the wail of the shepherd's flute, like the fall of a plashing fountain and the sough of the Summer wind, her name came then a melody to wrap about my heart. I bowed to Miss Katz in the entry, and harkened to a story of her former school; I talked with my uncle on the stairs; I won at dominos from Mr. Puncher and dined with manners impeccable — yet, I was no more an inmate of the home of Lawyer Littleton than I was an inmate of the City gaol.

No! For I was just behind that leather sedan-chair and its two Barbadoes bearers, plodding through such

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sunshine as had never shone before, following in that entrancing yet fearful speculation which every lover knows. No less than an hour after my dinner, while I paced my apartment alone, I had dashed through devouring flames and borne her forth unscathed, hurled to the earth a score of runaway horses as they were about to crush her tender frailty beneath their iron hoofs, and rescued her (apparently dry and immaculate!) from turgid waves upon a golden beach. At times, for this, I thought she thanked me prettily ere I could slip away in modest self-effacement. Again, her father, (an alarmingly venerable gentleman for such a youthful offspring,) wrung me by the hand, and bluntly insisted on our better acquaintance. At this thought of a parent, it gradually dawned upon me she might possess some earthly ties, and I decided it would prove wise to make some immediate inquiry as to Clarantine's identity. Therefore I started for the library once more, and again found Mr. Puncher — but now Uncle Littleton was with him, so I judged the hour to be past the half after three.

Had I acted upon inclination I would have cried, upon the threshold, "Speak! Who is she?" and then have flown in instant pursuit, probably minus my hat; but I had just about enough sense to sit down and try to lead up to the subject gradually.

The leading up was more than casual! Before I could make a start Mr. Puncher had launched forth

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upon the Molasses Act, and he could not have gotten himself much more involved, and stuck longer to his argument had he fallen into a barrel of his glutinous subject. Then the lawyer demanded my opinion of a man named Adams, a Boston fellow of whom I had scarcely heard. Then the Sons of Liberty came up again, and was criticized in my uncle's best vein. Time passed. Hours passed. As far as I could judge, days passed! And still they talked of this and that, and insisted I would take a voice in their discussion. While I wondered if this would ever terminate, the name of Broadfoot was mentioned. Instantly I remembered that it was the name of Clarantine's escort of the morning. Here was my opportunity.

"A gentleman named Broadfoot was here to see you this morning, was he not?" I asked my uncle.

"Yes, both the Major and the Colonel called on some legal business. And would you believe it, Puncher, they had the effrontery to bring with them that woman!"

"Not — ?"

As Puncher spoke I leaned forward to hear the better. Who was this glorious girl, this dainty golden Clarantine? Now I would learn of her I loved.

"Yes, sir!" snapped Littleton. "Right to my very house they brought her! That fallen wench — the Colonel's light o' love!"

"The Colonel's — ?" I thought I saw the astrologer

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make a covert sign of silence to the lawyer, but the room for me had suddenly grown dark. Dark, as though a fateful breath had snuffed the flaming candles. Everything seemed for a minute spinning about me as though I were the center of the universe. My uncle was still speaking, but his meaning was unintelligible to me; so groping to lay my glass upon a table at my side (until then I had scarcely been aware I was sampling some special vintage or other from our well-stocked bins) I rose, and begged to be excused.

I think the lawyer's eyebrows raised a trifle at my unexpected departure, but his companion evidently sensed what was amiss. At least, when I passed by his chair on my way to the door, Mr. Puncher reached for my coat, and drew me down to whisper a valuable but unnecessary warning.

"Shun Clarantine as you would shun the devil!"

Up the stairs I stumbled with this monition still hissing in my brain; nor did I even dare to think until my door was closed against intrusion.

Clarantine!

It was but the night before that I had heard Mr. Littleton speak of her with aversion. It was she, then, who had danced with Dean at a riverfront breakdown the night before that, when Thomas the groom played the spy.

Nonsense! I'd not believe it!

Clarantine!!

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The mistress of another man, and one whom Mr. Puncher had spoken of none too highly. A harlot, kept by a cheating British officer — and she had gone to a riverfront revel with Jasper Dean. Dean! There was a fine companion for such a child! A man who could not even keep faith with this lovely wanton, but must further besmirch her name for the joy of an hour's dancing. Yes, and with one so lovely to esquire, still was he receiving scented notes from other charmers, and dropping them carelessly about for scandal-seeking eyes to read.

A fine lover, truly — even for such a one as she!

Alas! My heart was crushed. I looked upon the world with ugly eyes.

Clarantine!!!

And then, with a sudden start, I sprang to my coat on a hook behind the door, and drew out the crumpled sheet, and fell on my knees beside the bed to smooth it for further careful perusal. It was dated the day before, and said the meeting must be "Wednesday night," so that must mean this very evening.

"Clan," it was signed. Clan. Clan! *Clan!*

What else could Clan be but an abbreviation of Clarantine! Of course the letter was from her! Well, what of it? It was scarcely ardent in tone. That was a small satisfaction. There was certainly nothing compromising or discreditable in her words. She might be willful, indiscreet, wayward at times, but

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here there was nothing to suggest other than that she was loyal to her — to the Colonel. God, but that thought cut me like a knife! No matter in what direction I turned there was no hope for me.

And yet —

Clarantine!

Her very name seemed to call to me. I do not readily turn from a purpose — and never had a man a greater incentive than my first glimpse of her engendered. But wait! Had I best speak to my uncle? Would he understand or appreciate my infatuation? And he would compare her with this other girl for whom Puncher said he sought a husband.

"Bad association!" he would say.

I thought of her eyes.

"Evil companionship!"

How sweetly curved her lips.

"Shun her as you would shun the devil!"

How gleamed the sunlight in her glorious hair.

"You, too, were born to be hanged!"

Her chin so round — so tender-sweet her cheek.

I was a guest, a probationer almost, beneath his roof. Had I the right to take any step without first consulting him — particularly one which I knew only too well beforehand must cause the greatest vexation? Perhaps I should tell him of the note I had found, and of Jasper Dean attempting to rob me of the snuff?

I started down the stairs with the letter in my hand.

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Hesitated! Dragged back to my room. Made another false start — and another. What could I tell him of my plans? I had none! Only must I meet and talk with Clarantine, and try to win her to me. To show this letter seemed to involve my honor. Hers too, perhaps. And what of Dean? Scarcely was he to be trusted, and yet it would seem right to go first to him with that which he had lost. Suddenly, as I vacillated on the stairs, Jasper himself hurried by me with a friendly nod, and made for his own room. He had but finished dining likely (a late meal through the kindness of the housekeeper, Mrs. Bergen, perhaps) and now he was throwing about him a light cloak, and preparing to depart. I looked at my watch. It was half after seven.

"No later than eight," read the note. He was going to her!

I returned to my room, secured my hat and sword, and slipping out of the great front door not a score of seconds behind Dean, I closed it softly behind me. Fifty yards away, unconscious of pursuit, he was bending his footsteps toward the center of the Town.

With her vision in my heart, I followed.

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CHAPTER V

I Learn of a Phantom Lane

JASPER DEAN bent his way rapidly toward the High Street which ran through the center of the Town; but on arriving at this popular thoroughfare, to my surprise he suddenly cast aside all pretence of haste or destination, and assumed a lounging attitude against a horsepost under a flare at the street corner. This left nothing for me to do but dawdle a short distance away from him, deep in the shadows.

It was but natural that the incentive which had driven me after him in this illogical pursuit would thrive best upon celerity, and the kicking of my heels together in idleness had me more than once near to returning. In fact I did take a regressive step or two; but in so doing, and because of my looking back over my shoulder at the indolent Jasper, I came into violent collision with a pedestrian, who damned me so completely and thoroughly for my sudden appearance from the shadows that, had I not feared the attracting of him whom I followed, I would have resented the insolence with my fists.

In glaring after this man — whose hat had been jarred from his head by the impact and now revealed

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a streak of mud upon the brim of which he was unaware — I noted that Dean had been unaccountably stirred into action again, and I was fortunate to obtain but a fleeting glimpse of him as he strode away in the direction of the Schuylkill. With a few rapid steps I was behind him like a specter.

At first I feared to dog his heels lest he turn, and learning of my pursuit, riddle and ridicule my vague reasons for it. But now was he so intent upon his mission, or so thoughtless of spying, that he stepped out briskly with never a look behind; all of which emboldened me to draw the closer.

At first the roadway was alight with lamps and flares at stated intervals, and also must I shun the cheery illumination from unshuttered windows; but when some distance had been traversed the buildings grew less frequent, and the public lights ceased entirely. And now we were forced to take to the center of the road, owing to the mud, and there the night was thick enough to make me almost lose him. Once, indeed, I blundered along after the wrong man, and would never have known my error until too late to mend it had not my unintentional quarry been providentially hailed by an acquaintance; thus I learned of my mistake in time to hasten ahead and come up with my own man again.

Turning off along a road which led north from High Street midway to the river, Dean hesitated before a

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large public-house all alight from cellar to attic. Then looking about him, not in the matter of suspicion but rather in the possible quest of some one, he disappeared within.

The tavern into which he had vanished — "The Pewter Platter," if I read the sign aright — was doing a thriving trade on this particular evening; and so great was the patronage that I might have entered also with impunity, and kept an eye upon him as I mingled with the assemblage. But rather than subject myself to an embarrassing recognition — for to confess that I had come so far at his heels simply to bask again for a moment in the beauty of such a character, while she further cast aside convention to meet him here, would have been as impossible as it was preposterously truthful! — I remained for the time without.

First I walked all around the building, which was of considerable size, and peered in at each window to learn if she was present. The crowd being dense, however, I was none the wiser for my pains; and while approaching the entrance again from about an irregular angle in the structure, I almost duplicated my former collision by barely avoiding a clash with a man who was also, apparently, making a survey of the guests without exposing himself to view. I would have paid scant attention to this second encounter had not this individual expressed his opinion of me and my ramblings with a blasphemous suavity which once

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heard was likely to linger in the memory — added to which was the smudge on the brim of his cocked hat.

It was the selfsame fellow whom I had encountered earlier in my excursion. Now, what the devil had brought him here?

He did not recognize me, of course, and our meeting again was purely accidental, but why did he prowl about as I was doing? And — this was an entirely new light upon the matter, unthought of until now! — whence had he sprung so furtively that I failed to note his approach upon our first encounter? Was he, too, searching for the Colonel's lovely consort?

That idea was not a pleasant one, so I set it aside. And now being directly at the door, I decided to enter and risk what slight chance there might be of recognition.

The tap, where I first made investigation, was congested with travelers, topers, soldiers, and idlers like myself. No women were there, nor did I see Jasper Dean among the throng. Several smaller rooms opened from this general place of entertainment, and I peered into each as well as I could for the clouds of tobacco smoke which permeated the atmosphere — keeping my hat well down over my eyes and my cloak drawn about me. No success crowned my efforts, however, until I crossed to the opposite side of the building, where a long low dining-room was thronged with a much more select and better mannered gather-

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ing of both sexes, seated there about small tables, among which deft servers scurried.

Here, but for the low hum of mingled voices, all was quiet; and realizing that this must be the place of meeting, I took advantage of the exit of a small party from a table close by the door to slip into one of the vacated chairs, and with my back directly to the room, motioned a servant who was passing to take direction for some biscuits and red wine. My table was by the wall, in close proximity to and facing the entrance, and so far I had hesitated to turn and survey the room or remove my hat or cloak, lest Dean be in the immediate vicinity. Looking from the tail of my eye to both right and left and seeing none whom I knew, I was about to lay aside my hat at least, when a man seated at the table directly behind me slid back his chair to rise, and in so doing jarred against me with sufficient force to necessitate an apology being promptly made. Thank heavens, I had not turned about with the jolt! The man was Dean!

Our backs were exactly together as we sat, but he was standing now, and gazing over my head in the direction of the door. And there, so slight and gentle on the threshold, stood my vision, Clarantine, accompanied by a stout elderly gentleman in a many-caped coat and an enormous cocked hat. She was in dark traveling attire, and her face being shaded and her golden hair screened beneath a hood, hardly was her

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arresting beauty discernible except to me and to him who stood awaiting her approach.

She recognized Jasper with a slight nod, and advanced promptly to his table. When she passed me so close we were that her dark cloak brushed my sleeve — and yet, whilst I was ready and anxious to brave the whole world for just a smile from her ripe lips, it was but truth that she had never seen me!

The gentleman accompanying her strutted through the entrance in her wake, his mouth pursed portentously, and with conscious mien. He evidently expected no warm welcome from Dean, and if the latter's utterance was any indication, he was not disappointed.

"So, it's you then!" was all I heard in the mellow Irish voice I was beginning to know well; but the sentence revealed both anger and surprise.

The stout gentleman was Mr. Joshua Puncher!

Seated directly behind my chair, every word they uttered was clear to me. Evidently this meeting would be along the line of strict business, Puncher's presence (how he came to be with her here was past my understanding!) acting as a check on the possible disclosure of a more intimate relationship existing there. When the first formal greetings were over and they were all seated, Clarantine opened the evident subject of the meeting in a voice which was clear and sweet enough to have belonged to no one else.

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"You have learned something, Jasper, or you would not have brought us here. What is the latest discovery?"

It was evident that Dean, thus addressed, was hesitating; and if his reticence was caused by the arrival of Puncher, that astrologer readily filled the conversational gap for him.

"The inference was that you had learned something of importance," he snapped. "If you know anything which will forward the search, out with it. If, however, this meeting was a ruse to secure a word with the lady alone, I will give you just one moment to declare yourself, or have the honor of seeing her to her chair."

Anxiously as I waited Dean's attitude toward this arraignment my eyes were still more busy with a new figure at the door. A man was leaning indolently against the wall in the entry without, and the frequent passersby might have thought him slightly the worse for his liquor. He had taken up a position not directly in the center of the entrance which would have given him command of the entire dining-room, but a little to the side, where the shadows were thicker, and from which he could watch my table without incommodation. Thus, although he lurched occasionally from one foot to the other and hung his head in somnolent fashion, his keenness of vision was as plain to me as the streak of dirt on his hat.

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"I have learned something," Jasper Dean was saying. "And it is for you — both of you — to decide how valuable the information is. Listen! You know that Johnny was hanged yesterday morning. Everything which I could do — " Puncher sniffed — "everything which *anyone* could do, was done to save him; but in vain. Learning on the eve of the execution that he was indeed condemned, I attempted to reach and talk with him in his cell. But though I went so far as to use Littleton's name in the matter this interview was denied me. I met a gaoler there, however, whom I had reason to feel would favor me; and by him I sent a message."

"A message? To what effect? " asked the astrologer.

"Asking Johnny to leave written word where he had hidden the gold."

"Why written word? "

"I had every reason to distrust this gaoler; and if he learned of a spot wherein treasure was hidden he would go himself and remove it. But you see, he cannot read. No; the safe way was to have it written to me."

"Did he write it? "

"Not exactly. No."

"You learned nothing from him? " If ever there was suspicion vocally depicted it sounded now in the query of the older man. Evidently he had no faith in this tale of Dean's. I, myself, was disposed to put

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little trust in it, but I put considerably less in another moment.

"I told you I had learned something. You know that Sloan told us he was called to Wells' side just as he was about to swing? There he was given a message for my ears alone. No, the bag of snuff had nothing to do with it. That was simply a blind. Sloan delivered the word to me this morning, but so far I can make but little of it. You have both lived in this City longer than I, and should know every turn and twist in it. Did you ever hear of Hart's alley?"

"I never did," said Clarantine.

"Nor I, either," said Puncher, after a longer rumination. "Why?"

"The message was that Wells had buried it at one end of Hart's alley."

"Did Sloan tell you this?"

"Certainly, sir! Early this morning. He rose at dawn to give me the message."

"Sloan!" said the girl, thoughtfully. "The man whom you have spoken to me about, Mr. Puncher?"

"Yes," said her elderly companion. "Worrell Sloan. He has come to stop at his uncle Amos Littleton's house for a while. Take my advice, my dear, and you will avoid Worrell Sloan as you would flee the devil himself!"

"Why, and he is a relative of the first lawyer in the Town?"

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"To begin with, he is no relative. And to end with, his reputation in many directions might be mended. Risk your reputation as you will with such as I, but leave Sloan and his like alone."

I admit that I was amazed at this, particularly coming from Mr. Puncher; and I could see no good reason for his thus maligning me — or to put the case more truthfully — for his lying about one whom he had known but two short days, and who had shown him both consideration and respect during that time. On the other hand I must remember old Matthew Henry's admonition, that harkeners seldom hear good of themselves. I scowled at my untouched wine, and I scowled at the man who still slouched in the hall, watching. But the next remark behind me was more encouraging.

"I think you are wrong about Sloan," Dean was saying. "I had a talk with him this morning, and I thought him harmless enough. He has absolutely no idea that he tendered me valuable information, and if he had, he lacks intelligence enough to follow the affair further. Poor Johnny Wells! He could scarcely have chosen a safer bearer. Well, show me Hart's alley, and I'll dig up a pot of gold for you as though it was the rainbow's end."

"Hart?" said Puncher. "There are several families by that name living hereabout. I will make careful inquiry. Likely the name applies to some small

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lane or thoroughfare beside a particular residence. You learned of this early this morning, you say? "

"Yes — doubting Thomas," said Dean, tauntingly.

"And you have made no investigation? "

"All that I could. I do not want to show too much interest in any particular spot. I asked where I thought it would be safe, and no one had ever heard of an alley by that name."

There came a pause, now; and the watcher in the entry edged nearer. He was too far away to have gotten even a suggestion of their conversation, but that he was as interested as was I, or more so, was unquestionable. Then, possibly because he noted my regard, he slunk out of sight toward the tap. The silence was broken behind me by the voice for which I was ever listening.

"If you learned of this only this morning, Jasper, for what purpose did you make this appointment? You knew nothing of it when you wrote me yesterday? "

"That is a subject impossible to discuss before a third person," he replied, while Puncher's snort of indignation boomed at my shoulder. "And yet I am in some ways glad that I have this opportunity to vindicate myself before one who holds me in such meager regard."

"Do you refer to me? " she interrupted, rather in astonishment.

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"No. Although I will vindicate myself before you yet, despite Littleton and his petty prejudice. I was referring to our celebrated student of the stars."

"You may speak as you will of me," said that gentleman warmly, "and knowing whence it comes I take no offense. You are correct when you say that I hold you in little respect. In fact you over-estimate my appreciation of your talents when you express yourself so mildly. But when you speak in disrespect of your benefactor, you prove to me that all my distrust and suspicion of you is raised on a firm foundation! If this rambling story is all you have to relate, we have had our jaunt for nothing. Come, my dear, I'll see you on your way!"

"Your years alone save you from expiating your insult. Stand aside! I'll take the lady to her chair."

"Now, now!" said the girl, gently. "We must have no more of this. You must both escort me to my sedan. And as soon as I am safe with my bearers must you both — both, understand! — set out in search of this Hart's court, or alley, or whatever it may prove to be. No scene which might shame me, and us all, in a public place, now! Remember my position here."

There was another pause, while she rose and straightened her cloak about her — and Dean settled with the waiter; then they filed past me to the door. I hung my head, fearing that one of them might recog-

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nize me; but they followed her slight figure, glaring angrily at each other when the occasion allowed — and neither thought of the cloaked and hatted guest at the adjoining table fingering his unemptied glass, or of the toper in the entry with his mud-streaked hat — and were away again into the night.

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CHAPTER VI

Spirits — Good and Evil

As soon as the trio had turned toward the main entrance of the Pewter Platter Inn, I at once called my server; and paying my toll hastily — to the probable enrichment of the waiter — I hurried to the tap, and thence to the court by a side door which I had marked as I walked about the building earlier. From where I emerged it was but a few steps to the path where stood Clarantine's small leather sedan and the two black carriers.

The lady was evidently just departing when I discovered them, being already seated in her chariot; and the two gentlemen were ranged on each side of the door, plainly regretting her going, if it was only that they would now be left alone together. It would seem that they were warning her and the servants as to footpads and kindred strangers, although such possibilities rested none too heavily upon the lady it would seem, nor upon the negroes either, for the latter were displaying dentated smiles of almost unbelievable dimensions.

In the next minute the chair was raised, and the slaves stepped into their rhythmic amble toward the City's center. The deserted astrologer and his young

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companion watched after the little group for as long as it could be seen by the lights and flares of the inn yard; and then they retraced their steps in the direction of the tap, seemingly indicating that their one accord lay in the desire for further and stronger refreshment ere they entered into the attempt to locate the mythical Hart's alley.

True to my original purpose, I followed after the lady; not drawing too near lest one of the negroes might recognize that they were being trailed, nor falling back so far that, did danger of any kind overtake them, my sword would not be at her command. It was not late as to hour, but it was most exceptionally dark. The usual comforting stars which sprinkled the almost black heavens seemed wonderfully faint and far away, staring unwinkingly upon the earth with neither warmth nor concern. An almost Summer moon was soon to rise and shed its welcome glory over all, but its moment had yet to arrive. At times I was compelled to come nearer to the sedan than I deemed prudent, fearing otherwise to lose sight of it; and when we had come almost to a spot where this road which we trod merged with the High Street, owing to the cessation of their progress altogether, I walked directly upon them, and was compelled for the sake of appearance to continue some distance further, and then step aside into a clump of trees to await their procedure.

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I remained thus for some moments, and they did not come. At first I was not alarmed, thinking the bearers were but taking their periodical rest; but when ample time for this had elapsed and no one approached, I decided to retrace my way, to see if aught had gone amiss. Stealthily making my way back, I arrived at the place where I had passed them, to find that they had flown? Whither?

On peering about in the darkness I thought I discerned a roadway which intersected the one I had taken at this spot; and knowing nothing better to do, I followed its rough surface until I had come free from the trees which had hitherto encompassed me, and detected at a great distance before me a moving object which might be my quarry. After it I hurried, and was joyed to learn that fortune had so far stood my ally, although this happy result was not assured until they had come to a decided elevation, the climbing of which retarded their progress and suffered me to again come near them.

Toward the top of this hill I was close enough to hear the passenger request that her carriers would pause and was naturally surprised to see her alight. The moon was rising over the distant City like a great golden shield, and its long beams clothed the hill where we were standing in mysterious illumination. I had sought an obscure spot when I saw the sedan stop, and from where I watched I perceived

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that the girl directed her servants to remain standing — and then advanced alone toward a coppice near at hand, and faded from sight among the leaves and towering trunks.

My first thought was for her safety, as there were always prowlers about a city's outskirts in the night; and her lack of protection might make even a common sneak-thief bold. Then there came to me the reflection that, notwithstanding into what danger she might venture I was but a silly presumptuous spy upon her actions. What she did was no concern of mine, and were I the gentleman that my breeding should have wrought, I would retire instantly. It was not yet too late to play the proper part. I would turn back now, and later make correct and formal effort to meet this lady, as I should.

I made up my mind to this decision, I say, but my legs seemed totally at variance with the idea. At the very moment when I knew my best course was to retire, they were bearing me, concealed by what cover I could find, toward the very clump of trees wherein Clarantine had disappeared. I made this same protection without having been seen by her chairmen, and paused to look cautiously about. I could not see her, so I moved on, and finally reached the far side of this particular copse.

It was not until I had stepped forth from their concealment, and had walked some way over the hill-

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top, that I caught view of a slight form resting at the foot of a great shaft pointing skyward. Closer I crept; and as I watched, the light of the rising planet reached and engulfed her as she knelt in the trodden grass. At first I did not understand, but as the moon-glow increased I saw that she was praying here on the hill alone. Her face was toward me, and toward the ascendant disk of gold. Her eyes were closed, and her slender hands clasped before her. The riding-hood upon her hair had fallen partly back, allowing the luminous beams to mingle with its fairer gold. She seemed a ghost or spirit there in the night — and then for the first time I realized that we were on the Gallows Hill, and that my love was kneeling, praying, there beneath the gibbet!

The night was still save for a whisper of leaves in the sighing air, and a cry of an owl in the valley's depth. Beyond the splashes of moonlight the shadows seemed to thicken and draw close, as though the spirits of darkness gathered there in countless hordes to press back the approaching rays. Great sable blotches all about betokened thickets, brushwood and bosk; while overhead storm-clouds flew against the sky — yet shone the moonlight on my phantom love, nor wavered till her orison was ended.

I watched her rise, and was moving into deeper obscurity when there came a wild rush of forms from out the night; and before she could scream or seek safety

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she was surrounded and grasped by a half-dozen ruffians who had evidently been lying in wait for just such opportunity!

They were gaunt, ragged fellows, I saw, directed by a tall, one-legged man whom I recognized even in this light as he whom I had stopped on almost this same spot the morning before, to make inquiry regarding Matt's Johnny.

She did not cry out, I say, nor would it have been of avail, as her servants were too far to heed, and likely there were none but us in this dread vicinity. Thus was I her sole protector.

The moment I had prayed for was arrived!

Throwing aside my cloak lest it hinder me, and drawing my sword, I gave forth a loud cry that it might not only hearten her, but let her assailants believe that I was not alone — and charged to the rescue. The odds were not so great as numbers alone would indicate. I was a good swordsman with a long blade, and likely they had but a staff or two among them for weapons. One was unable to do battle owing to his loss of limb, and the appearance of the rest hinted that lean fare and loose living had caused them to hunt in packs for protection rather than a desire to divide the spoils.

They turned and faced back as I came on, still holding the maid, but in two minds whether to stand or fly; and this hesitation gave to me the victory.

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Without a challenge I ran through the stoutest of the lot — piercing him in the neck, at which he fled, screaming — and gave the edge to a second on his tousled head. He dropped, and a third took to his heels without a blow being struck at him. One of those remaining smote at my sword with a cudgel, but I sprung within the blow, and struck him flush in the face with the heavy hilt of my rapier. He threw his arms wide with a grisly shriek, and pitched down with his bloody visage staining the grass. As he fell, the one whom I had clubbed to earth tottered to safety — and I turned upon my last remaining antagonist, the leader having stumped away on his crutch.

This fellow, none other than the spy with the mud-soiled hat, dropped his hold upon the girl and made slowly backward, fearing to face me, evidently, yet hesitating to turn tail and run as had the others — save one who lay now stunned and bleeding on the sod. I moved forward cautiously, as it would be an ill-fated termination to be now laid low with triumph in my grasp, playing for an opening to thrust. He perplexed me by showing something of a front to my weapon, as though he himself was armed; and in the dim light I held for a moment back, to make certain that he had not produced a firearm against me. I could not be positive as he was swaying and wavering but a pace or two before my blade — until of a sudden he raised

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both empty hands above his head as a sort of signal, and gave a shout.

That shout was the last sound which ever passed his lips; and pealing with it came a warning cry from Clarantine. Instinctively I sprang aside — so swift, indeed, that he whom I faced was unable to equal my agility — and the heavy crutch of the leader, who had crept behind me in the darkness, flew by my shoulder with meteor speed. In the iron hand of the hobbling fiend the staff with which he moved was more a menace than a score of swords, and hurled, lance-like, with his prodigious strength, it grazed but my sleeve, and crashed upon the brow of the accomplice who had attempted to hold me thus a target!

His skull crushed like an egg, and down he fell, a corpse upon the Gallows Hill!

The maimed assassin, seeing his plan for murder gone astray, and unable to make away from the scene of his crime except in a most distorted gait, screamed out in fear, and tried to make for the shadows once again. Each second he thought that I would be upon him. Each second the prick of his conscience was like my thrust between his ribs.

I could have overtaken him a score of times as he tumbled and slithered in the underbrush — hopping, to trip and crash upon the ground; grasping at nettles, writhing on the sward. Ever onward, like a slimy cockatrice, moaning and weeping in his terror, I might

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have overtaken him with ease, I say, but I could not bring myself to stab in the back an unarmed cripple — even such an one as he — so I watched until he reached a far-off spot of moonlight, where he rose and shook his fist and spat — and so was fled.

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CHAPTER VII

A Star Is Born

AS the one-legged man hurled his crutch, Clarantine had fallen in a swoon, and now lay like a sleeping child in the shadow cast by that ominous structure which represented local justice. I knelt, and raised her to a reclining position, whereat her hooded cloak fell from her, and forth of its binding broke her hair and spilled upon me like a cascade of gold. Her lips moved as my arms went about her, but her eyes remained closed. And then I lifted her from the earth and pressed her yielding form to mine. Upon my cheek her breath was honey-sweet; against my breast I knew the flutter of her heart. Insensible — she felt not my lips upon her silken hair, her slender throat, her hands — and in a moment stirred and sighed; at which I stood her gently down, with arms still circling her lest she fall, and spoke as tenderly as I might that all was well, and that she was indeed safe.

When she discovered where we stood, and the events leading to our position crowded upon her, she cried out, and attempted to escape from my support. But I soothed her with all consideration, and turning her

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back upon the two who lay — one moaning in pain, the other in awful silence — begged her to return with my aid to her waiting chairmen.

At first she was too distraught and confused to agree, or to know in what direction she must go; so wrapping her cloak once more about her, I raised her in my arms and bore her slight burden through the clump of trees from which I had emerged to do battle in her behalf. When we had reached an eminence from where she could see her servants lingering below upon the path, I placed her, grudgingly, upon her feet. As I did so she halted me with a gesture and taking a step forward, turned, and looked upon me as I stood in the moonlight.

"Who are you?" she asked, finally.

"One who came to assist you," I rejoined.

"Yes. But from where?"

"Those coppiced trees behind you."

"I know. You cried as you came forth, which gave me courage. But, tell me, what do you, an honest man, here upon the Gallows Hill?"

"I came to aid a lovely woman — did she require my help."

"Meaning me?"

"None other."

She thought for a second, and then slipping off her cloak, she cast it upon a rock, and sitting upon it, motioned me to a place on the grass at her feet.

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"You were following me, then," she said, when I was seated.

"Why do you think that?"

"You admit as much."

"And if I was, is it in your heart to blame me?"

"After saving me more than life — no! But I would know how far you followed me, and the reason of it."

"Must I tell you?"

"All — all!" And she raised her clenched hand to her lips with a gesture to suppress a cry of apprehension. "You do not know me? Say that you know not who I am!"

Evidently she was in mortal terror of discovery; and if for no other reason than the shock which had already been experienced, I felt that this was no time to enlarge upon her identity. Therefore I lied as smoothly as I could.

"I do not know your name, nor do I know your station, although the latter I may well guess from your conversation. What I do know, however, is — that I came after you here, because I had looked upon your face, and must needs toss aside the world, and follow, willy-nilly, that I might procure something in exchange for my heart."

"And how far did you follow me?"

"From just outside the Pewter Platter Inn."

"So, was I alone when you first saw me there?"

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"You were taking leave of two gentlemen; most like a father and brother, I would think."

"And you knew neither of them?"

"Alas, would that I might know any relative of yours, sweet lady!"

"You are a romantic, not to say bold, adventurer, sir. Did I not believe your honor as stanch as your sword, I would away with haste."

"Have no fear, I would not harm you."

"Indeed, I trust you well. And now, whom have I to thank for my rescue?"

"My name —" and then I hesitated. Not an hour before she had been warned against me, and by one in whom she evidently placed great confidence. Should I tell her the truth, and have her fly from me? Perhaps it were best for the time to keep her as ignorant as she strove to keep me? But, no! Regardless of Puncher and his insinuations, I had nothing to conceal or apprehend. Therefore would I speak firmly.

"My name is Sloan. Worrell Sloan, of Riverview, which is up on the Delaware. I am visiting for a time an old friend of my family, Amos Littleton, the lawyer."

"Worrell — Sloan," she said, softly, and seemed to muse upon it.

"Yes," I answered. "There is but one Worrell Sloan, I believe."

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It would have been gratifying to tell her how I knew of the warning so lately received, and how it was instigated by nothing — except perhaps an old man's jealousy; but this could not be done without showing her that I knew more than she evidently wished. Perhaps she was thinking of something near to the same thing, for after repeating the name softly several times — and never did it seem a desirable designation until I heard it on her lips — she laughed softly, and paused, to finally laugh again.

"Sir Worrell Sloan, my brave knight," she said. "I find that in many ways you are bold. It may seem strange to you, but I have heard that this same boldness might labor rather to my disadvantage. There my informant was obviously wrong. You have my best — my deepest gratitude, and my utmost reliance."

"And what of you?" I asked. "May I learn nothing?"

"Nothing! You have my word that I trust you — but I confide in no one! Of that you must make the best; and perhaps it is as well for both. To me you are but a valorous spirit of the Summer night; daring, impetuous, resolute, chivalrous. To you I can be but a chance encounter. My name, or the name of my family, my dwelling, or my friends, you must not know. You say you already hold me in some regard. Prove it by seeking to learn nothing I do not freely tell. Your

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common judgment will make it clear that a maid such as I should not be out alone without an escort — nor come alone to this place."

"You should not have come here unattended at this hour. The result has proven that. But why I should not know you I cannot understand. Perhaps you are not what you seem, a maid unwed? Perhaps a husband waits upon your homecoming?"

"Perhaps," she said, and smiled a little wan smile.

"Even so, you will promise that sometime I may pay my respects to your — your relatives? You will promise me that, after this night's work, I am sure."

"Nothing can I promise. But if you are as fearless as you were on Gallows Hill, surely we will meet once more."

"We will!" said I, confidently. "Let me ask you one question, however? Why did you risk the coming here alone to-night?"

"Believe me or no," she replied after a pause, "it was but a sudden impulse which beckoned me. Do you believe in ghosts?"

"N-o," said I, glancing about in the gloom.

"Yet it was you who saw Matt's Johnny die here by the rope?"

"I spoke with him in his last minutes."

"It was to you he gave the bag of snuff?"

"It was. How do you know?"

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"I learned of it to-night. Heed what I tell you — guard it well!"

"The bag! For what?"

"I do not know for certain. I might not tell you if I did. But do not let it escape from your possession. Now, tell me truly: what were the very last words he said to you — this dying man?"

I thought over the scene carefully before I spoke. When I replied I was certain I voiced the meaning of his last sentence, if not his actual utterance.

"My father is the farrier, Matthew Wells, as all know here. I — I beg you pray for me."

"Just so I was told. And did you do so?"

"Do what?" I stammered.

"Come! You would not turn craven over a mere word? Have you said a prayer for the dead, as he asked?"

"No," I answered, meekly. "I had not thought upon it since."

"So I imagined. And as I looked back upon the hill to-night I seemed to see him — see him as the little boy I well remember peering from the smithy door. He beckoned to me from the evening mist, or so I thought — thus here I came, hoping by prayer to light a smile deep in those plaintive eyes."

"He was a thief," said I; but she stayed me with a gesture.

"He was a soul!" she said. "Flout not this spirit

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on the Gallows Hill, but go you back to where you fought your fight, and on your knees amend an unkept promise."

"And leave you here alone?"

"I will to my servants. Nay! I will be with them when you return."

I rose, as likewise did she. "Another lies dead there where I go," said I. "And one sore wounded."

"Is it so! I seemed to dream that some fell, but thought it just in my delirium that scath was done to any. They were great villains; but now they are just bleeding men. Haste you away, but go into no danger for the dead! And I will pray for you as back you go."

"Let me first take you to your servants."

"Nay. First must I loop my hair somehow beneath this hood. The way to them is short. Go now, in the name of Him who can forgive all sin — and quickly return."

"Before I leave you — and while your hair still falls like a bright cascade about you — let me confess. While still you lay unconscious in my arms beneath the gallows, I kissed your hands! Your throat! And twice your hair! It's true!"

"I — I do not believe it!"

"The very truth I speak."

"You would not dare!"

"'Tis truth."

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"To think, you fight so valorously and yet you have no honor."

"It was my honor which bade me to confess."

"It had better been left as secret as it was done."

"Will you forgive me?"

She drew herself up disdainfully. "I —"

"So beautiful you looked."

"I —" She seemed unbending.

"I am your knight."

"I —" She shook her golden head.

"I love you."

"I —" She hesitated.

Forward her hand was thrust as though to ward me off, I grasped her slender fingers in my own — when, by a sudden turn, she pressed my hand close on her beating heart. She trembled, and the soft night-wind fluttered her glistening hair about her like a shimmering veil. My arms fell 'round her — drew her, crushed her to me!

Of moonlight was our kiss — of Summer night distilled. The flowers of the day had lingered there to lend it sweetness, the harmony of whispering leaves sang soft its bliss. And over us the shadowed cloak of modest night was spread to hide her blush. There as we clung, I think in the azure sky a star was born, to mark the moment when our lips were met. And then was I dashing, sword in hand, toward the gallows — transformed, enraptured, ecstatic!

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Down on my knees I fell. I was alone. The wounded and the dead were gone. Naught remained to tell of the blood here spilled but a shabby hat with a streak of mud upon it.

I said my prayer — nor was it all for him, this ghost of Gallows Hill, my plea was made — and finding my cloak where I had cast it by, returned to the spot made hallowed by our pledge —

And Clarantine was flown!

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CHAPTER VIII

A Message from the Dead

IT was late when I rattled the knocker on Uncle Littleton's door that same night. Late, that is, for the staid household wherein I now dwelt. And the servant who replied to my knocking compressed his lips and shook his head, as though he saw me far on the same road taken by Jasper Dean — and me but two days come to the City.

I thanked him for his trouble in responding, not only to gain his good will, but to definitely allay any suspicion that my tardy return was caused by wine-tangled feet; and went at once to my room.

A candle which the fellow had very civilly loaned me — and which I had gladly accepted, being none too familiar with the great house — showed me that my room was apparently in the careful order I had left it; and I was hurrying to retire when interrupted by a tremendous and unusual paroxysm of sneezing. The night being far too temperate for the acquiring of any illness, I could not but wonder as to the cause of this and succeeding explosions; but continued my preparations for the night notwithstanding, and was soon ready for rest.

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During this time, and for that matter throughout each moment since our lips had met, but one thought — one presence — dominated my being.

Clarantine!

Why had she fled from me? Where was she now? Was she safe? Was she alone? Was she thinking of me, as I was thinking of her? Would she meet me again? How could I arrange it? Would she send me a note? Would she be free to send me one? Dean had received a missive from her! Was it true — could it possibly be true — that she was really what Puncher and Littleton had implied?

I tried to force that last thought from my mind! But back it came, each moment with greater potency, to drive me mad!

I paced the room with fingers clenched; I railed at fate; I wondered, could I live to see the dawn! I tried to concentrate on something else. I might as well have willed my heart to cease its beating than bend my mind to other meditations. Always I began my revery there where she cast her cloak upon the moss-grown rock, and bade me rest at her feet. And then would I linger on each word, each turn, each gesture, until her presence seemed to wake within the room. Again I knew her fingers' touch, the perfume of her hair, her honeyed lips! And knowing these, and knowing what I did, I sank again into an abyss of despair.

Who had told me of her, and warned me too?

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Puncher! Ah, there was a sly one, Puncher! He knew her well, and where she might be found; and he had told me to shun and avoid her in tone and manner which implied impious opinion — and said the same to her of me! — yet smiled, and took his snuff; and thought himself a very pretty fellow, doubtless!

A very pretty scoundrel, thought I; (I must vent my spleen on some one, so why not him!) and opened the table drawer to — Kerchoo! — lay my watch within for safekeeping; and placed some wearing apparel in a highboy located there — Kerchoo! — for my express convenience. Then adjusting my little pair of steps, I was about to mount the elevation of my bedstead, when — Kerchoo! — I remembered the bag of rappee, and how she whom I loved had cautioned me to hold it safe. What better place could there be than under my sleepless pillow, thought I; and I set down my candle and went to my coat hanging behind the door, to take the strange gift from the pocket wherein it lay. As I touched my clothing I burst into another paroxysm, and this passing, I thrust my hand into my pocket for the bag. It came forth empty!

Matt's Johnny's gift was gone!

At first I groped about my pockets in a frenzy, and then I became more calm, and investigated thoroughly. I knew without doubt that the bag had been placed there by me, and could have been found and removed only in deliberate theft. There was not the faintest

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chance that I had mislaid it in a moment of abstraction. Who would take it? Jasper Dean? Impossible! Already he had had it in his possession, and made a minute examination of its contents. No stranger could walk into the house, and up to my room, unnoticed. It must be from within the dwelling itself that this — Kerchoo! — robbery was planned and executed, then.

Why was I sneezing so? I had no chill or illness upon me. Was it then — yes! Kerchoo! — there certainly was a pungent atmosphere of snuff about! Somebody had searched through my belongings, and spilled a highly aromatic snuff while doing it.

I hung back my coat upon the door, blew out my candle, and climbed into my bed to think — but not of the hanged man's gift. That little matter could be taken up in the morning. The snuff was a very fine grade of maccoboy, and I was getting really proficient in charging people with theft. No, I lay with my face toward the open window where streamed the moon — that love-mad orb which had lighted my heavenly interview with *her* — and I drifted into a fitful sleep, one name upon my lips.

Clarantine!

. . . . . .

" Good-morning, Mr. Puncher," said I, the following day, as I stepped into the library at an hour I was confident I would find him alone.

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"Good-morning! Good-morning! Good-morning!" he cried, as though really delighted at my entrance. "You have breakfasted again early, I presume?"

"Yes. I broke my fast in the society of Miss Katz once more."

"Good! There is no better society to be found, I can tell you."

"Very true. — Kerchoo! — You will pardon me for sneezing, but is that not an unusually pungent snuff that you are using? I do not recall coming across its particular tang before."

"You are right," he said, offering me his snuff-box. "It is a grade of maccoboy put up for me by Biglow, at the sign of the pipe and spoon on High Street. Very exclusive, or so I believe. Would you care for a little at any time? Do not hesitate to help yourself from a box on my dresser."

"That's kind, but I never formed the habit. It is fine to have a particular mixture for personal use, I think, as it in a way identifies you wherever you go. But for that, as an instance, I might have had much trouble to find who searched my room last night, and made away with the bag of rappee from my coat behind the door."

"Meaning — !" He rose ponderously to an upright position in the great chair, and looked upon me firmly. Mr. Puncher was a far better actor than was

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Jasper Dean. Therefore, when I regarded him calmly, but without a word, he regarded me just as calmly, and finally broke into a smile.

"You were speaking no doubt of the bag given you by Johnny Wells. What was your thought regarding it?"

"You came to my room last night — before I returned home — and took it."

"Nonsense!"

"I say you did!"

"Which is uncivil and untrue, but for which I forgive you as you are evidently intoxicated."

"What!" I cried.

"Drunk," said Mr. Puncher.

"You say that this snuff is exclusively yours?"

"I do."

"Then who could have sprinkled it so lavishly about my room but you?"

"Now there you show a gleam of sense. Instead of stating a fact of which you have no exact knowledge, you are putting to me a question. It is thus that we gain erudition. Who could have done so, you ask. Quite so! Who could? And the immediate and obvious reply which first springs to my mind is — some one who wished to cast suspicion upon me!"

"What —"

"Now, clear your head as well as you can, and focus on that one thought."

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"I am not drunk!" I insisted.

"Just a little," said Mr. Puncher, coaxingly. "Come now! Just a little, you'll admit."

"No! I am as sober as you are. Come up to my room an instant."

"No," said he; "I'll not go to your room, but I will tell you exactly what you should do, and I trust you will take my advice."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Go quietly upstairs, and bathe your head in cold water. Then mix a dash of mint with some lemon peel, and pour over that a stiff drink of brandy. Take it off instantly, and lie down for fifteen minutes. Then go to where you left the confounded thing you say I stole, and see if it isn't there."

"Fiddlesticks! I tell you I never was more sober in —"

"That is my advice! Use it, or discard it, as you please. But remember! As a rule I resent such charges as you have brought against me this morning; and unless you leave this room instantly I will call upon Mr. Littleton to protect me from further insult!"

There seemed nothing to do but comply. Comply, that is, as far as my departure was concerned. I rose, therefore, as deliberately as my dignity would allow, and closed the library door quietly behind me.

Once in my room I rehearsed the whole affair with great care. The bag was gone. That much was posi-

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tive. A faint but none the less definite odor of macco-boy pervaded everything. There was no doubt of that, either. If, as Mr. Puncher suggested, some one had desired to throw suspicion upon him, nothing better could have been devised; but who could wish to do so?

I turned that question over and over in my mind. No; there was no one who would benefit by such an act. The astrologer had proved himself mendacious by saying that which he had about me to Clarantine the night previous. He had shown himself unreliable in being with her at the Pewter Platter Inn at all. True, he had upheld the name of Littleton; but that was the sole thing I could discover in his favor. Outside of himself no one would have an iota of interest in the bag, except Dean; and he had himself given it back to me. No; it was Puncher. He had wondered if it still contained the message of Hart's alley which Dean had said I brought to him. He had taken it, and now he was lying! Lying remarkably well, it is true; but lying, nevertheless!

The fifteen minutes he had suggested for my recovery from confusion was now well past; and I was thoughtful of his advice inasmuch as to pour a sip of brandy from a decanter on my table, and down it. Then, with my purpose firm to fasten the larceny upon him regardless of his protests, I opened the door to descend.

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As I did so, something fluttered from the folds of that same coat hanging on a hook behind the portal. Swiftly and blindly it had been thrust toward my pocket; but with the swinging of the door, it fell almost at my feet. I picked it up, and held it toward the window. Even before my fingers closed upon the rough material I knew what it must be. I cannot say that I was very much surprised, except that I wondered why the snuff had been emptied, for it was without contents now. With that exception my strange gift was as I had first received it.

I went back to my chair and my thoughts again.

As was natural, I first examined the outside of the bag. There was nothing there which I had not noted before. Then I turned it slowly inside out. This I did for the first time, although I remembered it was done at Jasper's inspection. Immediately I saw that there was something written within. It was done on the coarse cloth with a pen, and I deciphered the words with ease, although at one place the sentence was divided by a seam in the material, which had caused the ink to spread slightly and blot. Thus it read:

> To Joshua Puncher, Esq.
> From Jonathan, only son of Matthew
> Wells. Born September the 13–44

As I read, two thoughts came to my mind. First: that Dean had seen this message when he had turned

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the bag inside out and had intentionally withheld the information from me. Second: that the dying man must have known that I was coming directly to Puncher.

Regarding the first assumption there could be no doubt; yet the words bore no thought of buried treasure in Hart's alley. Evidently that was but a fabrication to mislead the astrologer. As to Johnny Wells knowing of my destination, who could say?

But why was the gift sent at all?

And in answer to that unspoken query, the door opened — and in came Mr. Puncher.

He stood at the entrance with a troubled expression on his fat face; and then, with no invitation other than my rising at his advance, he came forward, and took a seat in my most comfortable chair. Placing his feet upon a stool, he brought from his pocket his snuff, and partook with a flourish. Then he spoke.

"Did you drink the brandy, as I suggested?" he inquired.

"I did indeed," I replied.

"And did you rest quietly for a quarter of an hour?"

"Longer, if anything."

"You then followed that up with a search for the lost article?"

"And found it exactly where I had placed it!" said I.

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"Well! Well! Well! Now, what have you to say?" and he rubbed his palms over his knees, and leered at me in expectation.

"Do you wish to know, exactly?"

"Certainly! Out with it!"

"Then, I think that you have come to ask my help to unfold this riddle: to find what Johnny Wells meant when he sent you this bag, before Dean or anyone else can get to the root of it. It was you who took the bag last night, and it was you who returned it again this morning while I was breakfasting. You poured out the snuff to get at the inside, and accidently found the printing. You don't know what it means, but you feel it might be something of importance, and you are afraid you cannot work it out alone. I have found the writing also, and I don't know what it means — yet. But I will know! And you doubt your own ability to learn the message. I'll not deny I have little confidence in you, Mr. Puncher, and I won't say on what my lack of trust is built; but I think that you are a stanch and true friend of Amos Littleton, and that covers a multitude of sins. Also I want you to do something for me in return for my aid. You can do it — and you must! Let us have no argument or quibble. Speak to the point. Am I right?"

"Yes!" said Mr. Puncher, with a kerchief to his bedewed brow. "Yes, damn it all, you are! And I know what you want of me in return, too. You would

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like me to bring you close to that minx you saw from the window yesterday! You would like me to pave your way to her regard! You will ask me to aid you to the love of one whom you heard your host condemn! You want, with my aid, to fly into the face of Providence and judgment and sound sense; and — damn me! — you shall. Read me this confounded and confounding message, that was sent me without reason or preface, and I'll take you to this winsome piece — for I know where she may be reached — and see that she hears a good account of you. But, remember this! I have warned you against her. For one reason, because it is she who aids Dean to locate this hidden wealth, that it may be spent upon her! She seeks, that she may squander! Nevertheless, and you aid me — me, you understand! — to find what is lost, I will do for you this thing if I die for it. But think well, my inexperienced friend! If this you demand in payment of your labor, it may bring you both pain and sorrow — this message from the dead!"

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CHAPTER IX

A Second Message

"LET us begin at the beginning, if there is a beginning, and you must tell me all there is of this matter," said I to Mr. Puncher. "Both you and Dean have spoken of some mystery or treasure to be discovered somewhere. Come now! If there is a story behind this bag of snuff, let it be known. You must hold nothing back if my help is wanted."

First placing a chair beneath the door-latch, that none could enter without permission, the astrologer moved his own comfortable seat before my open bedroom window; and stretching out his gaitered legs upon the broad sill, he partook largely of snuff, augmented by some brandy and water, and began.

"This will start some years back, but not so far that you will lack appreciation of the spirit of it all. You, of course, remember the Stamp Act, and the hardship it would like to engender on the Colonies? At the time this nefarious law was enacted our good friend, Amos Littleton — filled with intense loyalty toward his sovereign, George III, — would listen to none but words of praise for the abominable measure.

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I felt otherwise — strongly! Therefore I readily joined a league or confederation, known as the Sons of Liberty, which was formed to combat any and all evil legislation. Have you ever heard of the alliance?"

"Yes. Did not Uncle Littleton speak rather unfavorably of it last night?"

"I believe he did. Well, the gentlemen who met together under this name (and gentlemen they were at the time of which I speak), by co-operating with others of public spirit both here and at home, had this law revoked. When this was accomplished, interest in the meetings of the Sons of Liberty lagged. Those who had other business, or homes where their presence was desired, came no more. Even I, with no industry or ties of a family nature, remained away. Our work, we felt, was for the time being, achieved. In an organization of this sort there are always hotheads who would run to great lengths without wisdom or necessity; men who snatch up a gun when but a word is required. If such members can be controlled they are valuable for any society, as they enthuse the less zealous, like — let us say — myself. When attendance fell away, a few of these kept alive the spirit and the association. Thus, at times some committee waited upon me for a vote or a donation, both of which I gave. But for many months I went to no meeting."

"And did Mr. Littleton know that you were a member of this Sons of Liberty?"

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"Truthfully, I said nothing to him then. Perhaps he did not ask because he hesitated to learn the truth from me. And I would have answered honestly, at the time and with pride; for the best in the countryside were with us in the work."

"Since then there have been other acts and taxes, which are claimed by many as unjust of England."

"Yes. Unfortunately yes. So many, that perhaps a year ago I decided to again be present at one of the gatherings, to learn if steps could not be taken toward further reform. I went! Alas! In place of those staid and sober citizens who had formerly raised their voices in behalf of our Country, there stood the dregs — the scum, sir! — of our City! The atmosphere was steeped for the most in fraud and insincerity. The speeches to which I harkened were undignified tirades against authority. Delirious demagogues denouncing decorum! Insane mouthings from men of the type of Jasper Dean, who — oh, most unfortunate Sons of Liberty! — had risen to leadership among them!"

"Dean their leader?"

"Dean! I went from the meeting in disgust; and since have followed their activities but in the light of fear at their termination."

"Who, may I ask, was the guiding hand when you were an enthusiastic member?"

"None was more forward than was I, myself."

"Jasper has then supplanted you?"

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"No! Never that! He stands at the desk where once I stood; his voice now echoes where mine once was heard. But where I counseled moderation to a group of patriots — reputable and each above reproach, — he stirs, with vehement distortion, a motley throng of tattered ne'er-do-wells. The league I helped to build to save my Country has fallen into the hands of Philistines!"

"Do you contend that love of country thrives best in silks?" I asked after a pause.

"The well-to-do are best fitted for governing," he replied.

"Knowing both my wealth and my limitations —" I began, but he cut me short with a shout:

"Would you be ruled by such as Dean?"

So seeing that Mr. Puncher was much worked up, I sat silent and thought upon his recital. Here, then, was probably the main cause of the difference between the young Irish patriot and him. It seemed remarkable that beneath the rooftree of as ardent a Tory as the land could show, there flourished an anti-sovereign spirit so strong that it clove the household into hostile factions. Indeed, the times seemed fraught with thoughts of Liberty and Death!

Mr. Puncher was again speaking. "Now comes the most distasteful, and yet the most important portion of my narrative. I have said that at times I was solicited for money by the society. So it was with

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many of the former members. We gave, each of us, as we could, and never doubted that payment was made toward worthy purpose. More often they came to me — and still more often. At times they used the names of men whom I knew well, and well respected. After attending this last meeting, suspicion grew. When I had seen those who disbursed this wealth, I gave no more. As I expected, within a short time I was again called upon. I refused to donate further until an accounting of all which had been gathered before was placed before me. This was promised — but it never materialized. The man whose word I had that it would be given me was Johnny Wells."

"Was it he who sought further moneys?"

"No; but it was he who came to ask why I would give no more."

"Did you voice your suspicion to him?"

"I certainly did! I went into the matter with more thoroughness than courtesy."

"Had you any reason to believe that Wells was dishonest?"

"No. His reputation was not the best; but of his patriotism and genuine love of liberty I had no doubt whatever."

"Did you say to him that you questioned Dean's leadership?"

"I did. For just at that time I had made a discovery which placed Jasper in a most unfavorable light.

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I dislike to retail this to you, Worrell, lest you fear my dislike of this man over-prejudices me; but the point of my whole revelation is here. When I refused to give further to the Sons of Liberty, Dean — without consulting me in any way — collected a large sum for the league, and by the use of my name! I would not have known, but the donor spoke of it to me when it was too late to undo the mischief. Immediately I went to Jasper. He used the time-worn excuse that the expediency for collecting the sum condoned any irregularity, but promised to restore it if the giver was not satisfied. He has a glib tongue. The loan was not immediately recalled. I thought it should be, and said as much to all concerned. Wells called upon me just at this time, and I recounted the entire affair to him. He vowed to clear up everything to my satisfaction — and I never saw him again. Some weeks passed. I was about to prod further the leader of the society, when Jasper himself came to me with a long face, and a dubious lament: the money had been stolen! "

" By whom? "

" No one was positively named, but the inference was that Johnny Wells had made away with it."

" Could you find the suspect? "

" Yes. He was already in gaol, I discovered; but under the charge of a former crime. I went to see him at once, and was denied admission by Colonel Broadfoot, who is the military commander there. I flew to

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Dean. He assured me nothing could happen to Wells without his knowledge — you remember Littleton speaking of his doubtful relation with a woman who lives in the prison? — and that we would question the poor fellow together at an early date. That interview, and promise, took place the day before you arrived here. On the morning after our conversation, as no one could know better than you, Johnny Wells was hanged! "

"And you think Wells really stole the money, and this message to you might hold a clue to its hiding-place? "

"Frankly, I don't know what to think; but Jasper has led me to believe that it stands thus; and knowing nothing better to do, I will follow along this trail. But, Worrell, can you not readily see how easily Dean, or any of the others in this society, could have taken this gold, and blamed it on the dead? "

"Nobody seems clear of suspicion yet. But do you not think that Wells' sending the bag of snuff to you indicates a desire to communicate with one in whom he has unbounded confidence? Is it not likely that if he really took the money, he was hounded in the prison by certain members of this party to reveal where the cache might be? He knew that you would return it, had it been wrongly obtained; and I truthfully believe that somewhere in this strange gift is a key to its whereabouts, if we have but the sense to find it."

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"That is of course possible, and I would like to think it so. Did you bring any verbal message from him for Jasper?"

"None whatever. He mentioned no names — not even yours."

"He said nothing of a — a certain Hart's alley?"

"No. Absolutely no!"

"When you saw Dean at your first interview, and showed him the bag, did either of you mention such a place?"

"No. Where is Hart's alley, and why the question?"

"There is no such place in the City, as far as I can discover. Jasper and I spent much time last night in running it down. There never was such a spot, I am convinced. Dean told me you had brought word that it was there Wells had hidden the treasure."

"It is a lie!"

"I thought so when he told me. But, nevertheless, there are quite a number of people looking for Hart's alley right now. A few select members of the Sons of Liberty know as much or more of this than do we. They would enrich themselves with the discovery, naturally, and will be at each others' throats shortly, as is ever the case with pirates on land or on sea."

"Among these you count, I suppose, Jasper Dean?"

"Not necessarily. Dean seems so upset by the turn affairs have taken, that he would give back the gift

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to the donor as quickly as would I — if he could but lay hands upon it."

"Then what you told me of his trying to locate it to spend upon a certain — a certain young lady, was hardly true?"

"I did not tell you that he wished to find it to spend it upon her," Puncher explained carefully. "I said that she was bending every effort to aid him in locating it, so that she might reap the benefit — which means that if it is found by him, we may learn if his sense of duty or his sense of beauty is the greater."

"Then it is for us — you and me — to reach it first, lest he succumb to temptation. Then must you take me to the lady, for already have I surrendered to her loveliness. I feel, with this incentive, we must succeed, Mr. Puncher."

"Yes," he responded, doubtfully, "providing, of course, that Dean or one of his colleagues is not walking about now with the money safely stowed away in his pocket — or that Wells did not die, innocent of this theft."

When Mr. Puncher left me, which was on toward noon, I decided I was in possession of as many facts of the case as he knew himself. There had been several times when I was near to admitting that I had overheard the conversation at the Pewter Platter Inn the previous night; but the memory of his slurring arraignment of me, coupled with his association with

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the very girl he pretended so to despise, bade me feel that no matter how frank he might appear regarding the mystery of the lost money, I was still not as deceitful as he when I withheld my knowledge of their secret meeting.

Noting I had ample time before dinner for a walk, I took my hat and stick, and made for High Street. Turning toward the intersection of Third Street, I shortly found my path shadowed by the prison wall. At the corner, within the grim enclosure, stood a rather pretentious building in which I understood the officer commanding the penal forces had taken residence. The entrance was up a short flight of steps, and knocking at the door, I made inquiry for Colonel Broadfoot, and was ushered to his presence without delay.

Colonel Carlos Broadfoot was said to be, and no doubt was, a great favorite among the ladies; but if any had seen him upon this particular Spring morning, with his wig in buckle, and the fumes of the wine of the previous night still befuddling his brain, I think that much of his popularity would have vanished. A negro servant had opened the door to me, and after leading the way to an upper chamber, where his master sat over a belated breakfast, he continued to dust and scour the uniform but shortly removed evidently by the Colonel after a torrid all-night essay to "drown his throat."

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If his appearance did not attract me, the wavering gaze which he turned in my direction was scarcely replete with welcome or admiration. It was not the liquor in the man which disgusted me so much, for many good fellows are poor judges of their capacity, but the coarse and brutal nature beneath the social veneer which the drunken state revealed. It was the flaccid lying mouth, the pale cruel eyes, the wine-limbered tongue, which bade me shrink from the debased soul thus disclosed.

And yet — Clarantine was his! His alone!

"So you want to sneak into the cell where Wells was laid, that you may slink and pry and loot like the rest of the tricksters, eh?" was his formal greeting, when he had learned the gist of my desire.

"I wish," I corrected, "with your permission, to go to the cell, that I may seek for a message he likely left for a friend of mine."

"And who is this friend? And why does he not come for himself?"'

"He is one whose life has been spent far from the contamination of prisons," I remarked, pointedly; "and I thought it best to ease him of the venture."

"Being fairly familiar with the inside of them, yourself, I suppose. Well, I see no reason why every gallows-bird in the district should wear out the King's gaol before his time; so you can wait until you're ready to hang, and I'll promise you'll have the same

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cell as the late dear departed. Moses! Show this puppy to the door! "

" Moses! " said I to the negro. " Just dust this filthy chair for me, and I will sit a while until this boor is rid a little of his liquor. And when he is fit to be spoken, tell him that Worrell Sloan, of Riverview, desires a word or two with him — either civilly here at his house, or behind Christ Church to-morrow at seven. Either swords or pistols will suit in the latter case; but an apology is necessary for this affront if he decides to interview me here."

" What the devil do you mean? " cried the maudlin officer, leering at me in a fashion he probably thought intimidating; but I sat myself down upon the now dusted chair and regarded him firmly.

" I mean," said I, " that I came here to see a gentleman; and if you fall very far short of this requirement, I can at least wait until you are sober enough to do your best."

" If you refer to me, you scoundrel, I'll throw you from the room! " he shouted, but making only a half-hearted effort to arise.

" If you leave that chair, you drunken hound," I retorted, calmly, " I will most certainly knock you down, and kill you very thoroughly afterward on the morrow behind the church."

He had just about decided to remain seated, when a door into another part of the house opened, and a

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man whom I instantly recognized as the Colonel's brother, Major Marcus Broadfoot, entered — accompanied by a lady. Immediately, it would seem, the Major took in the situation. I cannot say that I ever drew close to the man, but his attitude to me was certainly most mannerly, and the predicament far from easy.

"Sir," said he, advancing so that he half concealed the Colonel as he slumped in his chair, "I regret to note that my brother is not himself this morning. If anything of an unpleasant nature has passed between you, I hope I may make amends by just that much greater courtesy. You came here for a purpose, naturally, sir. Would you care to confide your business to me, that I might show my interest and co-operation?"

"Major Broadfoot," said I; "I did come for a purpose, and your brother has been insufferably rude in his reception. Having come, however, in the interest of others besides myself, I do not wish to depart until I am certain my object is impossible."

"He wants to — " began the Colonel, but was cut short by the woman who had entered with the Major. Directly, I saw, she had gone to him, and seemed to be teasing and cajoling the sot to leave the room with her and the negro. Now she placed her fingers promptly over his mouth, although he snarled at this attention like a beast, which he was, and tried to push

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her aside. She was a tall, dark, bold-appearing young person, with a gross indelicate beauty, and too ready a smile to flash upon me. And without knowing who she might be, I thought her well mated to the company she was keeping — although the Major was the acme of politeness, so far.

"I wish to visit the cell in which John Wells, an executed felon, was confined. I have reason to believe that a message was left behind for a friend of mine; and it is the one place which I can think of that has not been already explored. Is there any objection to my looking about the place?"

"None of which I am aware," replied my new host, although he made no move to lead me directly to the cell. And then he said, almost as an afterthought: "May I inquire your name, sir?"

"Certainly. Worrell Sloan, of Riverview. Just at present I am a member of the household of Lawyer Littleton. You know him, of course?"

"I was to see him yesterday. And I have heard much of you, too. It is a pleasure indeed to meet you, even under these embarrassing circumstances. I am delighted to be of any service. One moment, until I make some arrangements. Is it in behalf of Mr. Dean that you are making this investigation?"

"Indeed no. It is for an elderly astrologer who resides in the same house, and who has been reading the stars of late, with rather remarkable predictions."

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"Well! Well! So it is our friend Puncher, eh? Now, anything I can do, or my brother either — There!" — as the door closed behind the latter, his servant, and the woman — "he is really a very fine fellow when he keeps away from port. But port is always his downfall. Would you like a glass of it yourself, Mr. Sloan? Just a glass, now. Come! Well, perhaps it is as wise. I don't know why Carlos can't hold it, but he can't. And naturally, it's the one wine he insists he can carry. Going back to Wells, though; he was supposed to have hidden some money, or something, was he not?"

"It is in regard to that, and a theory held by Mr. Puncher, that I came to-day."

"Ah! Then in thus meeting you, I have something to thank this footpad, Wells, for."

"Some speak kindly of the man," I suggested.

"Oh, yes," he answered, quickly. "Johnny was a likable fellow, with all his faults. I knew him but slightly, but I recognized that. Now, for the cell. But let me tell you beforehand, there is a bit of writing there, and if you can make anything of it I would be happy to learn your deduction. Step this way, please."

We crossed a courtyard at the side of the house, and entered another prison building by a small private door. Coming first to a small hall, I saw a figure slinking away in the distant prison-gloom whose halt-

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ing gait was unpleasantly familiar. I stopped still, and looked so long in the direction he had gone, that the Major turned to ask my hesitation.

"There was a man hobbling ahead of us, down that entry. A one-legged man, whom I seem to have known before. Is he a prisoner here?"

"It was Crutcher Gorspill, the turnkey. He has been employed by my brother since his arrival, and has proved a good man for the position, I believe. I have never paid much attention to him, myself. Do you know anything to his discredit, Mr. Sloan?"

"I am not even certain it was the man to whom I had reference," said I, and knew my words for a lie as they were uttered; for it was none other than the lame villain who had led his followers to attack Clarantine. Also, if I was not mistaken, the recognition was mutual.

Meantime, this incident being closed as far as the Major was concerned, we advanced to the foot of the stairs. They were steep and narrow, so we mounted in single file, until the top floor was reached. A door was open leading to a small apartment directly under the roof, and the barred windows and sparse furnishings made it a typical dungeon. Stepping within, my guide paused before a plain whitewashed wall, and pointed to a spot where the light from the window seemed to concentrate. From any part of the room the letters composing the sentence were visible. In other words, there had been absolutely no effort on

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the part of the person who left the message to conceal it. Its situation really rather suggested the reverse.

The letters were scratched with some sharp instrument in the layer of plaster which covered the inner side of the wall, and they read as follows:

A Step
From Low Stone Abutment
Obliquely off
The Third Pier
Guarding Hart's Alley Wall. Dislodge Narrow Cobblestone
Seekk For It
J. W.

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CHAPTER X

CLARANTINE

TURNING from the prison, after thanking the Major for his courtesy and making a careful copy of the inscription on the cell wall, I walked north on Third Street, and made into the open country above Spring Lane. But three days had elapsed since my arrival in Philadelphia, and yet much, it seemed, had transpired in those hours. As I walked along the thought of Jasper Dean would occupy my mind, to be supplanted presently by the memory of John Wells, the farrier's son, who in turn would make place for the aged astronomer, or the lawyer in whose home I was staying. This was the continuous round of my speculation — with ever the name of Clarantine ringing like a silver bell in my heart.

So like a bell indeed — so like the music of a chiming sistrum — came the musing upon her, that soon it mingled with a more decided clanging; and almost without noting the alteration of my destination, I turned toward where the sound of hammer on anvil awoke resonant echoes in the wooded glade — and shortly stood before a smithy door, the music from

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which, heard afar, had brightened my entry to the Town but a few days before.

Just within the doorway of the shop there stood big Matthew Wells, black-smeared among the flying sparks, and beating out a horse's shoe with steady ponderous strokes. So incessantly his sledge rose and fell, and lightly tapped a rhythmic beat between each heavy blow, that I had trouble making myself heard; but eventually he ceased from his labor, and hearkened to my greeting and queries, while he leaned against the long arm of the bellows.

"I've come to speak a word to you about your son, if I may, Master Wells," I said. He nodded his head slowly, which was with him the showing of emotion. Then he replied:

"You be Master Sloan, from Riverview, be you not? I remember you and your folks right well. You was with my poor lad when he went, I'm told. Well, Johnny was not the worst of all, if he was not the best. Bad company did for him. He hadn't been here to his home this six months or more, before — before — "

He paused, and his gaze wandered from my face to rest upon some clustering trees which topped a distant hill.

"You say you have not had his confidence for half a year? " I asked.

"I hadn't had his confidence for long before then. I said he had not been to see me. I might as well

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speak out direct to you, Master Sloan, and do no beating 'round the bush. The boy never said nothing to me of Hart's alley, and I don't know as I ever heard of such a place."

"Why, I didn't mention Hart's alley to you, Master Wells," said I.

"No? Well, most all who have come here since the lad's gone has."

"Who for instance?"

"Many," he answered, with further shaking of his head. "Jasper Dean, and Colonel Broadfoot of the prison, Gorspill the warden, and some I don't rightly know the name of. I never heard of the place before, so I could tell nothing; but Crutcher Gorspill (you know him, sir; the one-legged gaoler) he got so abusive when I told him this, that I was forced to run him and his murderous crutch out of the smithy at the point of a white-hot iron. He's a hard man, sir, and no mistake."

"I think I know the fellow," said I briefly.

"I'm a lone man, now that the boy is gone," he continued after a pause; "but some have been kind to me — and some have been kind to Johnny's memory."

He was stepping to his anvil again, as though to terminate our interview, when I stopped him with a gesture.

"It was not about Hart's alley that I came to inquire, Master Wells, but regarding something entirely

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different. Perhaps you can tell me, did Johnny know me by sight? You recognized me at once."

"Oh, yes. I think he would have known you readily. He was often in the shop when you and your folks went by, and while some years has gone since I shod for you, the change ain't been so great but what I'd know you anywhere. Beside, we all knew you was to come to Mr. Littleton's house shortly."

"How did you know that?"

"How? Well, the doings of the rich folks is gossip for the poor, I suppose. It would be but natural that my boy would know you, and yet you might disremember him. Why do you ask?"

"Because he called me to him as he stood on the hill, and gave me a bag for Mr. Puncher at Littleton's, and this fact has set me wondering."

"I heard of the bag of snuff being given," he said. "I think, perhaps, he was going to send it by — by the hangman; but seeing you, he knew that you were to be trusted. I don't know no other reason for it."

"May I ask who told you of this strange gift?"

He hesitated, and resting upon the handle of his sledge, he looked again upon the budding Spring beyond the open door.

"It was a lady," he said, finally. "I do not know her name, but here she came to say a word of comfort to me. You may not understand, Master Sloan, but though the lad was wild — he was my flesh. She told

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me how you had stood by with sorrow in your heart for him; that he had not been done to death without a tear to fall in sympathy. She said perhaps he was not guilty of the crime for which he paid; and when the truth was known, it might be shown to all that he had died a martyr rather than a thief."

"May I ask when this lady came, and what was her appearance?"

"Her look was kind. Her eyes were big and brown. The time was yesterday, about this hour, I think. Do you not see, the sun is just now edging in the door. And so it was when she was here, because I well recall when she stood on the threshold, it shone upon her hair as bright as glows this melting bar upon the coals. She said she'd come again — to-day perhaps. I did not ask her name; but she was kind."

"Had she known your son?"

"She told me so."

"Perhaps she was from the prison, and knew him when he lay there?"

"It might be so; I did not ask."

"Thank you, Master Wells," said I. "I do not know the lady's name, but I have seen a sweet and gentle soul like you describe. She told you truly when she said I carried sorrow in my heart for Johnny. If ever any act can clear his name, or give you other comfort, you will not find me lacking in zeal to bring this same about. Remember, and call upon me."

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"Thank'ee," he answered, absently, still gazing from the door. "Thank'ee kindly, sir."

"Good-day to you," I said, and was passing from the smithy, when he stopped me with an exclamation of pleasure, and pointed down the lane.

Along the narrow path, bordered by meadows fair with verdant grasses, there came a leather sedan-chair, borne by two stalwart blacks. A pace or two before the door it paused, and forth she stepped upon a carpet of bright dandelions — of marigolds, and buttercups and thyme — which reached to pave her way as she advanced. Into the open sun-lit door she came, and took in her tender fingers the sooty toil-stained hand of the smith; placing within his vigorous grasp, now fallen limp, a little volume.

Ah, Clarantine!

"It was his," she said, looking into old Matthew's face, and never seeing me back in the shadows. "It was his when he went to school — a little lad. He left it for you in the prison when he went. I thought, because he read from it the hour he died, that you would hold it dear. It was his Bible."

The blacksmith nodded, speaking no words but patting her small hand the while in his great palm. And seeing that he did not dare to thank her for a moment, she babbled on, of subjects holding little consequence, until he got the mastery of himself again.

"That was real kind to think of me," he finally

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said. "I cannot rightly tell you how I feel; but you, being you, must know as well as me. You will excuse me having dearth of words. But — though he acted wrong perhaps — he was my flesh — my lad — Johnny."

"He's happy now," she said; "he's with his mother. What little wrong he did, if any, here is all washed clear. You have your work to do — your life to finish out. If he was weak, he grew in strength at last. And you must not give way now he is gone. This little Book spelled courage unto him, and so will do to you. See! Your iron cools upon the beak. Take to your work again, and I will place the Bible on this shelf where you may glance upon it as you weld. I must be gone, but I will come again. Good-day to you — until we meet again."

"I have less time to think of sorrow, if I am at my forge. You're right, I have my work to do. God keep you merry. Wait! Excuse me for forgetting, but here is a gentleman who thinks he knows you, ma'am."

Clarantine turned in surprise at this, but even in the darkness of the shed she recognized me, and her face went pale at first, and then she blushed prettily.

"It's my knight," she said. "And how are you, after your adventure of last evening?"

"Much happier now than an hour ago I would have

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believed possible," I told her, as we walked side by side from the forge.

"You should not have said that you knew me well, Mr. Sloan. You do not know me at all."

"I knew you well the moment I first saw you — knowing that my fate hung on a golden hair. Still more I learned of you last night upon the hill: your courage, and your tenderness and faith. To-day this visit to the smith has added still some further attributes: sympathy, kindness, gentle understanding. Of what more can I learn? This seems to run the gamut of all virtues. Your name? Your name could spell to me but what you are, and must be beautiful in thus denoting you."

We moved together through the sunny air. Just where the trees hedged in the little shop, a rustic bench was built beneath a blotched-trunk sycamore. Below the new-sprung leaves we rested — I all a-tremble, she in bland composure; I singing in my heart like any thrush because my love was by, she scarcely noting that I was beside her — yet knowing but too well her lovely potency.

Clarantine!

"It was kind of you to bring to Johnny Wells' father his Testament. He left it at the prison, you say?"

"Yes. It is a little copy that Miss Katz gave him, and she had written his name upon an inner leaf,

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and the date. It was given to him upon his eleventh birthday."

"Indeed! It was given to him upon September thirteenth, then, for I remember that such was the date of his birth."

"How could you know?" she asked.

"Do you remember hearing of the bag he gave me on the gallows? In that was a word to Mr. Puncher; and Wells had signed his name, and the date of his birth. It was, I am certain, September 13th, 1744."

"He could not have written it so; or, more likely, you have the wrong day upon your mind, for it was in the Spring that John was born. I know, because our birthdays were not far apart."

"I am so certain I am right that I would make a wager on it."

"Yet you would lose," she answered, smiling.

"I still will wager!"

"Such overweening assurance should be checked. I'll take your wager, though I know I'm right."

"Good! And the stakes are that you will meet me here to-morrow, that I may show you what he wrote."

"That's scarcely fair," she cried. "For I must pay the bet to prove that I have won!"

"I am so sure of what is in the bag, that I will wager anything you care to name, against a — kiss."

She rose majestically.

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"By night you are courageous, sir. By day I find you over-bold. Because of what you did to save my life — because of the racking of my nerves — I may, last night, have placed too great a faith in your integrity. If so, it was foolishly done, yet you confessed to some such boldness while I lay unconscious. Permit us, then, to let my indiscretion die; and be assured it will not chance again."

"Believe me, I had no thought to offend. Please sit again. Last night I will forget, if you insist, until I'll wonder why I joy so in its memory."

"You are not even talking sense," she said. "However, it makes little matter, doubtless. 'Tis late. I must be going."

"Going!" I cried. "But you've just come!"

"Yes. Simply to bring the little volume from the gaol. My errand's done. I did not think to find you here."

"You must remain a while," I pleaded. "I cannot let you go so soon. Who knows, perhaps a week will go before we meet again!"

"A week!" she answered in surprise. "When we parted last night I never thought to see you more! A week! Why, you must know, a score of gentlemen would think I showed them a favor to let them call upon me once a fortnight!"

"I love you more than all the score together, Clarantine; and, therefore, I must see you every day."

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She started back as I spoke, and I thought she was about to run from me. Then, paler of face than a moment before, she sat again beside me on the bench, to put a question.

"When —" she asked in a tense voice, "when did you learn my name!"

"I —"

"Speak! You called me Clarantine. That name did not spring to your lips by coincidence. Where did you learn it?"

"That name sprang to my lips — because it fills my heart, Clarantine."

"Who told it to you? The truth!" she cried sharply.

"Puncher told me," I stammered. I could have bitten my tongue out for using it so carelessly. "It is the name of her I love, Clarantine."

"Joshua Puncher? I cannot believe it!"

"It is true."

"What did he say of me?"

"He bade me beware of you. You ask the truth, and thus it was. He knows I love you now too well to credit anything but praise of you."

"Did he mention any name but Clarantine?"

"No. Perhaps he thought I knew what that must be some day."

"What it must be some day? I do not understand."

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"I must change that name of yours some day to another name I know."

"You know too much," she replied airily. "And yet with all your knowledge you cannot even remember the date in the bag of snuff Matt's Johnny gave you!"

"I can!" I answered stubbornly. "It was September the thirteenth."

"It was not! He was born in May."

I shook my head. "I'll wager anything you ask — against your coming here to-morrow."

"Wait!" she replied. And hurrying in to the smithy, from which the clang of the hammer sang steadily, she shortly emerged with the Bible in her hand. Bringing it to where I sat, we were instantly poring over the clear inscription on the fly-leaf. It was in the smooth round hand of his former teacher, and ran thus:

> "To Jonathan Wells, on his
> eleventh birthday, May 8th,
> 1752. From C. Katz.
> 'Search the Scriptures.'"

"There!" she cried, triumphantly. "I told you he was born in the Springtime!"

I read it carefully, and then shook my head again.

"To-morrow I will bring the bag here for your inspection. I know —"

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"I will not be here to-morrow," she interrupted haughtily.

"You will not let me prove my memory true?"

"Your memory is of little importance to me."

"I am doing this, of course, but as an excuse to see you, Clarentine. Will you not let me prove my love is true?"

"I think that of less importance still."

"And yet I really love you, Clarantine."

"You'll live to love again," she said.

"I only live when I am with you, Clarantine."

"Your days will be short, then," she said.

"A thousand years to gaze into your eyes would seem but one short day, Clarantine."

"You would tire of that soon enough," she said.

"Try me at least, for one little hour to-morrow, Clarantine."

"No. And don't say Clarantine so much. You have not my permission to call me by my Christian name."

"Dearest —" I began, but she clapped her hands upon her ears, and said:

"I think we'd best go back to Clarantine — that is, until you learn I'm Mistress So-and-so. To-morrow? Nay! Some day in June, perhaps. To-morrow is too soon — beside, it's like to shower in May."

"Why, then the smith will let us use the forge!"

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"And breathe singed hoofs, and melting iron? Give me the mead!"

"Perhaps the smith might melt your heart, Clarantine."

"Or temper the boldness that your speech reveals. Touch not my hand! To-morrow is too soon, by far. Beside, I should not really come at all."

"If that's too soon, let it be the day following," said I. "Longer than that I really cannot wait."

"It would be more discreet upon that day — but being so fair this noon, I fear good weather cannot hold 'til that time comes. And in the forge I simply will not sit! Perhaps to-morrow would be really better."

"Clarantine!"

"Truly, I must be gone. Until to-morrow, upon the hour of one!"

And in her chair she stepped, and off she rode; whilst I sat back upon the bench, the little Bible in my hand. How fair the world! And yet, how dull the day that now she'd gone. Ah, well I knew what good Will Shakespeare meant when these rich lines he wrote so long ago:

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put the spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lay of birds nor the sweet smell

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Of different flowers in odour and in hue
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew;
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern all of those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow I with this did play:

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CHAPTER XI

A Ghost of a Clew

WE dined that day as usual at four. Although I did not tarry on the way other than to return the Bible to the smithy I was late on arriving, and found Mr. Littleton, Miss Katz, Mr. Puncher, and (to the collective surprise, evidently, of all) Jasper Dean; my host having held back the grace for my arrival. Dean had arrived at the table early, and most fastidiously dressed, and bowing all around, had generally made himself so agreeable that we all wondered a little, and Uncle Littleton was actually worried.

Customarily politics was the chief conversational sauce served at table, but in respect to a variety of opinions — and in an effort toward peace — other topics were broached. Certain people of the fashionable Town were mentioned and discussed, and some coming festivities named. So far I had met practically no one through my host, but he now informed me that I was to attend a fine rout at the home of a particular friend of his, on an afternoon during the following week. He further advised me to purchase something

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new in the way of dress for the occasion, and even indicated Jasper as a good one to acquaint me with the haberdashers.

In fact this dinner was the most lively and enjoyable I had sat to since my arrival, and I think we all rose from the board with regret. I had so far no opportunity to tell Mr. Puncher of my visit to the prison, and I decided to keep my own counsel until I could see if anything might be made of the message written on the wall; although when I retired to my room directly after the dinner, my mind was far too busy with dearer thoughts to remember the possession of the prison writing.

I had scarcely been seated, however, when a knock at the door introduced Dean for a few minutes.

"I have been very busy the few days of your stay, Worrell," he explained; "but something Mr. Littleton just now said bade me stop in for a moment to offer an apology."

"For what?" I asked. "I was unaware one was necessary."

"That you did not note its omission makes it the easier for me. I feel I should have seen more of you in the last few days, but business of one kind or another has never left me time for even so enjoyable a diversion. I was wondering, however, if you were free to-night. I would be delighted to further any desire you might have; and if female society is attractive I

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know where several ladies may be found who can well appreciate as pretty a fellow as yourself."

"Thank you heartily for the offer. Another time I will be happy to seek your company. But to-night I have some work myself, which is pressing, and beg to be excused."

"I understand. I have been in the same position for some days gone. Well, good luck to your endeavor, whatever it may be, and — oh, by the way! I heard that you were down at the gaol this noon. Did you read what Matt's Johnny wrote on the wall? It's a joke, you know; there isn't any Hart's alley. And there wasn't anything stolen, either. Poor Mr. Puncher (the best fellow in the world he is, but he's getting old!) thinks that Wells really took something of value. I thought so myself, at one time. Do you remember when we looked at the snuff-bag the other morning? I thought so then, but I had not seen the directions on the wall at that time. I have learned since that it is all some of Johnny's foolishness. He was a great fellow to joke, was Johnny."

"Who told you I was at the prison, — Puncher?"

"Yes," he lied glibly, "and I was sorry you had been sent on a fool's errand by him. Ah well! I said nothing to Puncher of the rumor being false, for I like to tease the old fellow — when it does no harm, of course."

"He's a character," said I. "But about this hidden

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treasure business, really I never had any faith in it. Personally, Jasper, I believe you told the old gentleman the whole yarn to see if he could find the truth in the stars, eh?"

He laughed, but shook his head. "No, I won't go quite as far as that; but he will never find anything in the nature of buried gold. Well, good-night, and we will meet to-morrow, likely."

When he had closed the door, I went back to my reviewing of the question. Was there nothing in the rumor, as he said? I could spend my life on these clews, and yet get nowhere if there was no gold hidden. How could I prove that he was wrong, and John Wells really had a message concealed in these three scraps of writing — the snuff-bag, the Bible, and the copy of the writing on the prison wall? In whom should I place my faith: in Dean, who had lied and stooped to theft; in Puncher, who had lied and stooped to slander; or in the golden girl for whom my whole heart hungered?

Clarantine!

At noon on the following day I was well on my way toward our tryst. The day was bright, with, in the south, a covey of snowy clouds sailing majestically the azure heavens. The air was filled with that vigorous vernal glow which told of stirring sap and opening buds. No fairer day could I have found for this most fair encounter. But when I had left the busy streets

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behind, and turned into the open country, a knowledge came to me that I was followed. I had no shame of my meeting, but for the maid's sake it were best to use discretion, possibly; so having ample time, I sat me comfortably upon a low stone wall which stood about a rolling pasture, and looked to see if the shadow behind me would materialize to flesh and blood. I cannot say just how I knew that some one dogged my jaunt; an extra sense perhaps, which warns of danger; a half conscious heeding of footsteps which ever seemed to echo mine. At all events I sat me down, I say, just past a bend in the road, and in another minute around this turn, at a brisk pace, came Jasper Dean. Now this surprised me, for I had thought I had been followed by a woman.

"Why, good-day, Worrell!" he cried, on approaching; and yet I thought he was disconcerted too at being caught so easily. "And what are you doing so far from the Town to-day?"

"I am sitting on a wall," said I. "Will you not join me for an idle hour?"

"I wish that I could," he answered. "But I must hurry along on business of importance. When you return, say that I will not be at dinner will you?"

"Surely," said I. And watched him walk away about another turn in the road further toward the woods. Now, while he had been speaking I thought I had glimpsed a flutter of a green skirt behind some

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bushes near the bend where he had first appeared, so, after he was well upon his way, I climbed the wall on which I had been resting, and made over the pasture to a lone apple tree which grew about the center of this field by a little brook. Once there, I made close examination of the ground about, poking with a staff at the gnarled roots of the old fruit tree, and cutting a blaze with my knife upon its tough bark.

Recalling then an inn but a short distance back upon the road, I retraced my steps thither, and going within ordered some ale and a rasher. Resting but a short while, I emerged, and made in the general direction of the pasture again; but keeping well to one side of it where I had noticed the trees were thickest. Pausing in a thicket, I gazed with interest at the tree I had marked. The distance was considerable, but still I could discern that three men were working there now — digging! Long and deep they dug below the overspreading leaves. I might amend this with the truth that but two really used their shovels, and the third stood by, and urged them to their task. I did not recognize those who labored so valiantly, but the third figure seemed strangely like my good friend, Jasper Dean.

I was surprised again, when nearing the rendezvous, and at a crossing of the same stream likely which divided the pasture, a woman stepped forth of a grove, and asked my aid for her over the brook. Being thus

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spoken I could do no less; so taking her hand I guided her over the mossy stones which served as a crossing at the spot. She was a tall, full-figured girl, with coarse dark hair and ruddy skin, and the smile with which she favored me, and the grasp she retained upon my hand, made me drop my eyes before her too bold glances.

"Thank you," she told me. "La! But it's hard to cross, and keep one's stockings dry. But through the lend of your hand — see! Mine are not even splashed. I saw you coming through the trees, and liking your looks I waited for you. I thought perhaps you'd help me pick some blossoms, if I asked you."

"What blossoms?" I asked, looking at her askance, for I noted first when she accosted me that her skirt was green like the new leaves. Too, there was something vaguely familiar about her; yet to me the women of her evident type seem much alike.

"There are dogwood blooms up higher on the hill," she told me. But realizing I was already late for my meeting with Clarantine I hurried away with some scant excuse; and if she followed she must have flown, for I ran at top speed the distance remaining to the forge, fearing my love would not remain to see me.

I paused, however, when I came to the edge of the little clearing where stood the smithy, to catch my breath and look about me — eager indeed to be beside my love, yet loath to seem too ardent, lest she laugh

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at me — as though she did not know! No one I saw about, but I noted at once that the hammer was not a-clang as usual, and that the low brick flue gave out no murky smoke.

And while I wondered, waiting there, I heard a rustle in the path behind me, and there, beneath a screen of emerald branches waving in the fragrant breeze, stood Clarantine, her bright eyes shining with delight that she had caught me so.

"Clarantine!" I cried. "Have you been standing long and watching me?"

"Watching you!" she cried. "Now, why should I do that? But I was taken with the actions of a man — he looked like you, but naturally it could not be the same — who spied upon the place we were to meet, and yet seemed fearful to approach the spot. It was not you, I know, because you are so bold. And yet he stood just where you're standing now; and wore, I really think, your suit of clothes."

"I am not bold when I think of my love for you, Clarantine," I said. "It is so great it makes me tremble, lest losing you, I lose my life as well! Give me some hope that you are not indifferent to me?"

"Indifferent! Bless the boy! Have I not hurried all through the woods in fear that I might be late, and you be gone in anger? To find you tardy in your thought of me, indeed. Indifferent! Never did I make such haste for any man — and never will again.

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Did you bring the bag of snuff? That is the most important thing to think of now."

"Yes. Have you the Bible with you?"

"'Tis in the shop. Old Matthew has gone to Town upon some errand, and left me in full charge 'til his return. Had we not better rest there, in the shed? No prowler then can take us unaware."

"Dean having followed me for half the distance — yes. I think it better if our meeting is not spied upon. Evidently it is thought that either you or I know where these moneys are concealed. That was the cause of the attack upon you on the Gallows Hill —" and then I told her of the digging at the apple tree I blazed.

Entering the smithy, I drew a bench from the wall to a spot before the door, but well from sight of any passing by, and throwing my cloak upon it, sat her at my side. She sighed at the thought of being spied upon.

"I try to place my faith in Dean," she said; "and yet I cannot down a strong suspicion. He always will agree that this treasure is hidden in some unknown spot, and yet he sneers at Mr. Puncher's efforts to locate it. I sometimes wonder, Worrell, if Wells ever took it. And if he did, has not Dean found it hours ago?"

"If you had seen him digging at the tree, there would be little question in your mind."

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"Yet might this not be just a blind also?"

"I do not think so, but perhaps we may find an answer in the puzzle of Wells' writing. How sweet it is to have you here alone! If you are comfortable upon this cloak of mine, let us look at what he has printed in the bag, to promptly decide the wager we have made. What were the stakes? Can you recall?"

"I do not hold with gaming," she assured me; "and in this case it seems so dreadful, somehow. Poor Johnny dead — his kind old father sorrowing. Yet here we sit where he has often rested, his Bible and his snuff-bag in our hands, — breathing the sweet air, drinking in the Spring!"

"Would they be happier if we were dull?" I asked.

"Probably not. And yet, to hasten to such meeting — "

"Lovers' meetings!" I whispered.

"— and in this very smithy. Should we be happy, should I feel this joy, and dear old Matthew weeping?"

"Dear Clarantine," I said; "the skies are bright, the sun is warm, the brook is free to babble once again — and yet poor Johnny's gone. So wags the world! And who would have it otherwise? Because he's dead, you have not grown less sweet; nor have my eyes been dimmed to all your glory. The man was naught to me — you are my life! I'll talk about him — but I'll think of you."

"But is it right that we should wager over one who's

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gone? " she said. " Should we draw happiness from these solemn things? "

" You mean that you are happy here with me? "

" Do you not claim you're pleased because I came? " she asked.

" You know I plan my life about our meetings! But you said, we draw happiness from being here! "

She turned, and looked so frankly in my eyes, my ardent gaze near fell.

" With this Book in my hand, I could not so dissemble that you would think I did not care. My first thought in the dawn, when I awoke, was of this meeting. I'll say no more, so make the most of that. And now, the bag, and let me read the writing."

" Was I not correct? " I asked as I turned the rough cloth to where the printing showed.

" But why did he change the date and year of his birth? And why, again, did he put the date of that event in his gift to Mr. Puncher? "

" It was no accident," I said. " Somewhere in this there lies a key — if we have wit enough to find it."

" Perhaps so. Otherwise, why should Jasper spy upon you? "

" Possibly to make some ill report upon me to Mr. Littleton," I hazarded.

" Would Mr. Littleton not like your meeting me? " she asked.

" Why, really, I hardly know just what to an-

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swer — " I stammered; but she laid her hand for a moment upon mine, and flashed a sad smile in my face.

" I think I understand, Worrell. Mr. Littleton has other plans for you. And is it likely I could count among them? That is but natural. Look you who I am! "

" Who are you? " I asked.

She shook her lovely head, and smiled again.

" Yes, even I see that," she said. " And naturally, it would be to the advantage of Jasper to turn your uncle against you if he could. But there may be another reason why he would watch us. He might be jealous of me! Don't misconstrue this. I give him no encouragement at all, but he finds no an answer hard to take."

Placing the open Bible in her lap, and holding the printing in the bag beside it, she fell into a study of the two, while I at her side drank in her presence as one breathes deep the incense of the rose. The midday sun, sparkling on the fields and trees, stole slowly out toward the west. Into our rendezvous none could now see, nor yet approach without being seen by us. We were alone, we two, just as that other hour upon the Gallows Hill. So, as she mused upon these bits of writing, about her slender form I stole my arm. Against my sleeve there lay the bright confusion of her hair. And when I stooped to kiss this glorious halo

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'round her lovely brow, she feigned she knew not of my meek caress — keeping her eyes cast down that I but saw her curling lashes on her cheek — yet to this cheek there rose a dainty blush.

So long we sat, silent — for words would break the heavenly spell which lay upon my heart — I fell a-trembling lest it be a dream; for so much had I built such fancy from my eager hope, that, but for the warmth of her young form beside me — her fragrant curls, the thrill of twining fingers — I would have named myself but John-o'-dreams, and feared the heartless dawn would whisk my joy away.

In time she turned her face to look in mine, at which, seeing such beauty there within my arms, must I then crush her to me with relentless grasp, in which she struggled like a frightened bird. But for one ecstatic moment her pouting lips yielded themselves to mine — then she was at the door, with shy averted face.

"I must be gone," she said. "Too long I've lingered. Beside, I think I'd like a love more tender. You're rough and bold, and show me no respect."

"Stay a while," I pleaded. "My homage is the measure of my love. Indeed, I never acted to offend; and if I have, your beauty is to blame. Dear Clarantine, sit by me, and tell of what you made from all this puzzle. I swear I'll close my eyes, not to be blinded by your loveliness."

"I've looked and looked, and stared upon this writ-

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ing," she said, returning to her place, " until the words have blurred into a senseless jumble. The thought I have more than any other is, that were I writing such a sentence in the bag, I would have chosen for the labor a portion of the material through which there ran no seam. But Johnny, I see, has placed the words in such a manner that a joining of the cloth runs through the sentence. Look on the words to the left of the seam. Do they convey anything to your mind? "

She placed her hand over the printing to the right of the ridge in the bag, and I read as follows:

To Joshua Puncher, Esq.
From Jonathan, only son of
Wells. Born September the

I read carefully, but the result was as barren to me as to her. With flagging hope I turned to the remaining few words, divided by this line of stitching. There seemed nothing in them but a name, and some figures:

Matthew
13–44

But as I repeated this over aloud, a vague memory was stirred.

" Matthew, thirteen–forty-four; Matthew, thirteen–forty-four," I kept saying; and while I was trying to recall what memory stirred at these words, Clarantine said:

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"You sound like a minister giving out his text, Worrell."

No sooner had she spoken, than we were both seized with the same thought, and fumbling the Bible between us, we turned — after some searching — to the book of St. Matthew, and located the thirteenth chapter and the forty-fourth verse. Leaning close together over the little volume we read the words — and then with a cry of delight I caught her now unresisting form in my arms, and kissed her as a token of our victory!

For what I read in the Book of Books was this:

> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; and which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

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CHAPTER XII

The Tender Spirit of a Dead Romance

THE morning after this second meeting with Clarantine at the smithy, and our united discovery of the meaning of Johnny Wells' first message, I again broke my fast in the society of Miss Katz (our little half-hour together each morning was getting to be a delightful habit) and found she had already learned of the fate of her former favorite pupil.

When our meal was finished, therefore, she begged me to remain and relate what I knew of his passing, so in the best choice of words at my command I spoke of his death, and mentioned the Bible — her gift of long ago — found among his few possessions at the prison. I could see that she was greatly moved; and lamenting his fate as much for the disgrace it brought as for its prematurity, she broke into a flood of little stories and recollections of the farrier's son as a child. There was no doubt that his former preceptress had found much to love in him as a boy; but then she was of that tender nature which would ever find something to admire in the worst of us.

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From young Wells direct, we fell into a chat of the past; and of Mr. Puncher, and his queer humors; and Mr. Littleton, and his goodness. And the more she talked the more the question rose in my mind, "Why had she never married?" There was every evidence that she was most comely, and of charm and spirit, when young; and yet, here she sat before me, alone in the world but for my foster uncle's charity. It could never have been that he, Amos Littleton, was the object of her unrequited regard, for she — so he told me — had been a bridesmaid at his mother's wedding. Yet she spoke very frequently of him in relating past experiences. Finally, during a moment of retrospective silence, my curiosity bade me broach the subject.

"Miss Katz," said I; "how was it that such a charming and gifted woman as yourself managed to escape the snares of matrimony?"

"Worrell," she replied, after a thoughtful hesitation, "it was neither for want of an opportunity, nor for the desire to become a wife. It was simply because the man whom I loved found that, while he was not indifferent to me, there was another who was dearer still."

"That seems impossible!"

"I could have turned from him to a score of others — for at that time I was regarded as an heiress of considerable means — but I preferred to remain single rather than prove untrue to a passion I felt was the

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purest emotion of my existence. The name of this gentleman you do not know. He is now dead. Let me say in all fairness to the lady who held the place I coveted, that she was far younger than I, far more beautiful; and while she lived made him the happiest of men. They had one child, a daughter. She inherited the charm of her father, and his wife's beauty. I know well how sweet she is, for I taught her in my little school side by side with poor John Wells."

She rose, and went to a desk in the corner of the room. Thinking I had perhaps done wrong in bringing forward these none too happy memories (although there are those who love to hug to their breast the recollection of past disappointments) I made haste to stammer a hope that in my question I had not transgressed the bounds of painful reminiscence. She shook her head, and brought from the desk a book, carefully wrapped in soft paper, and placed it in my hand.

"With the one exception of poor Johnny, you are the first to whom I have ever shown this little keepsake from the man I loved," she said. "Look at it carefully, for it has an interesting feature."

The volume was a small copy of *Maidenly Meditations on Scriptural Excerpts,* by the Reverend Samuel Wentworth Drawler; and if there were any interesting features I felt certain they were outside of the text. Above the title there was written, in a very fine hand, a verse, which I here append.

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Kind friend, if you should ever roam
'Mid scenes of beauty far from home,
Yet in your wanderings chance to dream
Of other days, lit by a gleam
Of friendship pure, of friendship true,
Be sure that I will think of you. D. D.

I perused these lines carefully, and admit that I was not greatly impressed. It may as well be said here that, after thoughtful consideration on my part, there was nothing in the words or demeanor of Miss Katz's lost love, save this one small gift with the verse, to substantiate her insinuation of his affection for her. And I further believe that this idea had grown solely from a strange coincidence to which she now directed my attention.

By taking the first letter of the first line, the second letter of the second line, and so to the end, the word "Kittie" was spelled; and it would seem that her Christian appellation of Katherine had so been condensed when she was young. Here, then, was an odd result which had spelled romance to her for half a century: he had hidden her name in his poem! Personally, I do not think he had. Anyone who would have idea enough to do such a thing would have certainly written better poetry. But to her it was a solemn proof that he had held her dear; and who was I to turn her mind from this belief?

I said what I thought was most delicately proper;

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and she launched forth into some words of wisdom anent her experience: how those who really loved should never be parted, and how foolish it was to separate through misunderstanding and live a life of regret thereafter. I agreed with her heartily, and wondered who D. D. might have been.

While we were still chatting, a servant informed me that Mr. Littleton would like a few words with me in his study, so I made my excuses, and hurried away, interested in what should cause him to send for me at such an early hour.

He was seated at his great table-desk when I entered, and he bade me pull up a comfortable chair and prepare for some minutes of conversation. First he asked me how I had been impressed with his home and mode of living, saying that he had left me intentionally much alone, that I might judge without prejudice. When I had indicated my hearty approval, he asked me to speak freely of each member of the household, and my opinion of all. Naturally, of Miss Katz I spoke with enthusiastic regard; of Mr. Puncher with respect, but admitted some doubt as to his wholehearted support on many of Mr. Littleton's pet ideas. Regarding Jasper Dean, I confessed an illogical admiration, notwithstanding his evident entanglement in affairs not strictly ethical. I found it hard to explain just what I meant about him, because I could scarcely form my own opinion of the Irishman.

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"I like Dean," I said, finally, "because of his high spirit and enthusiasm; and because I honestly believe he thinks that what he is engaged in is right — although we know it isn't."

"What is he engaged in?" asked Mr. Littleton.

"Well, I don't really know," I admitted.

"Then how do you know it isn't right?"

"Well — there you are!" I repeated lamely. "Jasper seems to be one of those people who always will go wild over the wrong thing. For that matter, you don't like what he is interested in."

"I don't like that woman he is interested in. But you speak as though you were not judging for yourself, but have let me influence you in estimating the man?"

"Certainly," said I.

"But I don't want to form your opinions. Base your judgment on what you know to be true. Not on what I think or say."

"Pardon me," said I, firmly, "but that seems to me impossible. I will frankly admit that ninety-five per cent. of all my beliefs are founded entirely on the judgment of others. So, I would think, are yours, and every other person's. This life is too full to hesitate and analyze each unit on which value or opinion is built. You have told me that Jasper Dean was interesting himself in revolutionary ideas — and low company. You have associated longer with him than have I, so naturally I think you are correct, and my opinion

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is thus formed. Therefore, if I see Dean riding in a coach with a beautiful woman, I immediately jump to the conclusion that she is an undesirable person. Of course, on analysis, she might prove to be the Queen of England; but from what I have learned from you, it would seem unlikely."

"Wait just a moment," said my Uncle Littleton. "Do I understand you to say that the majority of my ideas are second-hand theories, gathered helter-skelter from God knows where?"

"That is practically what I mean. I say it as no reflection upon you. We are all of us the same."

"That is nonsense!" he gasped. "Do you sit there and tell me — Why! I defy you to mention one opinion I hold which is not founded on reason!"

"What day of the week is this?" I asked.

"Thursday. Why?"

"Is your opinion that this day is Thursday based on your reasoning the matter to a conclusion, or is it founded on what you have been told — and accept without personal verification? Now, don't make the obvious reply that you know this is Thursday because yesterday was Wednesday. Also, don't insist that a theory exploited by the majority for generations is necessarily correct, because you know it often isn't."

"Of course you appreciate that this is an abstract illustration, unworthy to be brought forward as a proof. Now take, for instance, some opinion on events

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or persons with which we are daily associated. Choose for example something of general interest, and you will find I have run to earth many rumors before I form my judgment."

"Very well. The other afternoon you spoke very freely of a Massachusetts man, one Adams. And if I recall your words, you said he was a fire-brained wide-mouthed windbag. Also you remarked that he should hang thirty feet in the air for his words before the General Court of that province. I really don't believe you ever heard the man speak, — ever saw him at all, for that matter, — nor have you studied with unbiased mind the conditions and the spirit which prompted his utterances. Understand, I don't mean to say you are wrong in your judgment. I am merely trying to point out that none of us investigate very far when we condemn or approve. We simply borrow, or inherit, or acquire, our opinions — and cling to them very tenaciously afterward, because it is so much easier than to sift the affair to the bottom."

"We must all go to the Holy Land then, and see the angel standing by the stone at the sepulchre, before we can be Christians?" he said.

"No, no! The foundation of Religion is faith — not proof. You know that line of argument is weak."

"At least you would have me prove that the King's laws were just, before I would obey those laws?"

"I would rather suggest that you prove your King

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and his advisers were just; and then you could have respect for all the laws they made."

"I do not question either my King, or his laws!" he replied. "He is my King! That is enough for me. God put him on his throne, and made me his loyal subject."

"Would you — nay! Could you — have been the same loyal subject to Nero? Or Cesare Borgia? To Alessandro de Medici, say? They all reigned by the grace of God, or so they would have had you believe."

He paused for a moment, and looked me over with a keen glance.

"When," — asked my Uncle Littleton, "when did you join the Sons of Liberty?"

"I! Why, I never — "

"Tut-tut," said he. "Perhaps you don't know it yourself, but you are growing a rebel and a malcontent at heart — thanks to Dean, and his friends."

"You are wrong, Uncle Littleton. And even if such a change had taken place in me, it would never be fair to blame Jasper Dean for it. Truly, he has said nothing on that line to me. I fear I have spoken too freely this morning. Forgive me, if I have; and tell me, why did you send for me at all?"

He hesitated for a minute, with his eyes on my face; and then reaching into a drawer of the desk before him he produced a bundle of letters. Sorting

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several from the package, he held them across that I might read the signature thereon. There was no mistake that the name was "Samuel Adams."

"To show you those was not the purpose for which I called you, however. Nor am I in any way offended at what you have said. I have no quarrel with opinions freely expressed. Or rather, I have no quarrel with him who expresses them. I sent for you to mention a rather delicate subject; and now, after our little debate, I am in a quandary as to how you will accept my proposal."

"Let us begin as though I had just entered the room, then."

"Very well. Nothing previous has been said. Now for it! Worrell, I have not been with you much these last few days; but those who have, particularly Miss Katz, Mr. Puncher, and Mrs. Bergen, have spoken most heartily in your favor, and have all expressed a hope that you will come with us next Autumn, and read the law with me. Very much pleased with their good opinion, although from a son of your parents I would expect nothing less, I thought I would express to you a hope which otherwise I would have kept until you joined us again later in the year, or (it is even possible), never have spoken of to you at all. It is on the subject of your future, and the future of another — one most dear to my heart. I might preface this with the information that

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your father and mother understand, and approve of what I say."

"You have written them?"

"Yes. And even before you came we were in accord in the matter. Listen! Many years ago, before your parents were married, I had a close friend by the name of Donaldson Dale. Although he was some years my senior I am about to pay myself the compliment to say that we were kindred spirits. No better friend or companion ever lived than he; and were we seen apart, our friends wondered, so close was our association. Of course you know that I fell in love with your mother. My suit did not prosper. He also became enamored of a beautiful girl, many years younger than himself, and shortly they two were married. While our real friendship was in no manner impaired, our intimacy naturally waned; not so much because the warmest welcome did not await me at his home, but because the woman I had loved was now wedded also, and because it then gave me pain to look upon the happiness I now could never reap enjoyed by others."

"Surely there were a score of pretty girls for you to love, Uncle?"

"No. Love came late to me — and but once. There never could have been other than just Nancy. Well, my good friend, Donaldson Dale, was happily married but a little over a year, when his young wife

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unexpectedly died at the birth of a daughter. From the day of her death he was a broken man. He went nowhere and saw no one. I forced myself, at times, into his company, for I feared his mourning and solitude would unseat his reason; but nothing that I or his other friends could do awoke him from his grief. At first his little daughter meant almost nothing to him; but as time went on, and she grew into charming maidenhood — in the care of good Miss Katz — he turned to lean upon her as he had once trusted his heart to her mother. Gradually she advised him to renew his friendship with me, and trusting in her counsel, he did so. Once more we became fast friends, although the alteration of these many years had made in our persons and tastes was indeed extraordinary. He confided much in me, and dying some three years ago, left his daughter in my sole charge, although mistress of a house filled with servants, and a distant elderly female cousin to spend her too great income and act as her social guardian."

"I think I remember Mr. Puncher speaking to me of this young lady."

"Did he? Well, she is going to give a rout in a few days, to which you are bidden as a special guest of honor. It has always been my wish to see the child properly and safely married off before she is snapped up by some fortune-hunter, of which there are many, doubtless, in her train. Will you consider this when

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you meet her? Will you try to look upon her with the interest of a possible future husband? Remember, any to whom I might lean will receive that much greater consideration, for my influence is strong with her; and you are well favored, and have no need for money. What say you, Worrell? "

"I fear that what you wish is impossible, sir."

"Come, come! Don't tell me that! We oldsters all wish it; and you and she may reach the same conclusion before an hour is gone. I do not ask for any promise, of course, but simply a word from you that my wish will receive some measure of serious thought."

"I cannot do it, Mr. Littleton! "

"And why? Your parents tell me you are fancy free."

"I am not! " I said, bluntly.

"What? " he cried. "Why, I understood when you came here — "

"I have been here several days! "

"You don't mean — ! " cried he in amazement.

"Exactly! "

"Who, in heaven's name, is it? "

"I — I cannot tell you, sir."

"Cannot? Cannot! Why? "

"You would not even like me to know her."

"Good God! " he shouted, clapping his hand to his brow; "not that infernal prison Colonel's woman? "

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"You have just told me to reason things out for myself," I gasped, desperately. "You would not have me give ear to idle gossip! I have seen her — and I love her. If I can free her from this man to whom fate has linked her, I will marry her. No! I will listen to nothing! There can be no second love in my life, either! No! No! No!"

Fortunately the door was closed, for we were shouting at each other as though volume was convincing argument. He was pacing the floor with his hands above his head, shouting, "Idiot! Fool! Imbecile! Half-wit! Dolt! Dunce! Blockhead! Simpleton!" and a hundred other appellations more descriptive than polite. I was merely content to drown his voice. Finally we both ceased for breath; and he recovered his the sooner.

"Don't you know that this woman is notorious? Why, Jasper Dean —"

"Talk! Tattle! Nonsense! I have met her, and I know. You have met her, and should know! She is a lady! There is absolutely nothing between her and Dean; and he will be the first to say so. Come, Uncle? Be more reasonable."

"Reasonable! And you have come here to my house to get into this mess; and your mother will blame me —"

"She will blame no one! It will be an honor for her to welcome my wife —"

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The old gentleman's face went white. "Wife!" he stammered. "Wife! This is Puncher's doing. Send him to me!"

"It is not! Mr. Puncher has had nothing at all to do with it. I did ask him to bring us together, but it was not to be until I had done something for him. Do not blame an innocent old man —"

"Innocent! Don't call Puncher innocent to me. He's a damned old fool, if there ever was one, and I'll speak to him at once! Go to him, and send him in!"

"I will. But understand; it is not his fault that I love this girl as I do; and never will I give up Clarantine!"

Uncle Littleton turned actually livid at my words, and sunk into a chair which was fortunately near at hand. With a wild gesture he indicated the door. His lips formed the word, "Puncher," but no sound came. That was not necessary as far as I was concerned. I departed to find the astrologer.

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CHAPTER XIII

I Send a Letter

"PERHAPS you don't like to be called a damn' fool," said Mr. Puncher, snappishly, later that same day; "but terms applied to us are, as a rule, what we deserve rather than what we desire. As far as I can see the description fits you perfectly."

"It is a matter of principle," I said.

"It is a matter of common sense and common decency — and flying into the face of Providence, besides. You say yourself that Amos only asked you to look on the girl kindly. He didn't say you had to marry her, did he?"

"Would it be right to Miss Dale?" I said.

"Would it be right to Miss Dale!" he echoed with the sarcasm of which he was master. "What do you care about her? What is this girl to you? You don't know her! You don't want to know her! It seems to me it would be a great deal more delicate to show some interest in a social affair that was gotten up in your honor, rather than roar out that you would have nothing to do with the maid, or her meeting. Would it be right to her? Bah! I say, bah, sir! You care

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for what you think right to Worrell Sloan, and no one else."

"Not at all — "

"Don't argue! " he snapped.

"But, Mr. Puncher — "

"Didn't I warn you when you first came? " he interrupted. "Didn't I tell you that Amos was likely to ask this very thing of you? Didn't I tell you to meet him half way, and fall in with his plans, until you had time to see a way out which would hurt no one? Look at Jasper! Even he had sense and kindness enough to go along with the suggestion for a while. But you! And now the good man is furious."

"I will not consider marriage with a girl I never saw; and she would be mad to consider it with me. I love another! The suggestion of Mr. Littleton was tactless, to say the least. If he cannot stand the truth from me it is best we part before we go further."

"I notice that you do not care for marmalade," said Puncher irrelevantly.

"I welcome this change of subject, but I do not see why you should bring the matter up now. However, I may state as a fact that I do not care for any kind of marmalade. Why? "

"Why? Because at the table yesterday Miss Katz begged you to try some that she had herself made. Do you remember what occurred at the time? "

"Not particularly."

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"Well I do. She first spoke about it, and you then most courteously remarked that, while as a rule you never took it, you were certain that anything made by Miss Katz must be so superior that you would like to taste a sample. At that she gave you some; and you were compelled to admit that, while it was undoubtedly the most delectable conserve you had ever tasted, you must still regret that your palate was too undeveloped to do it proper justice. Further you said, I remember, that if ever you did learn to appreciate its toothsomeness, it would be the sweetness of the cook rather than the dish itself which caused the alteration. Is my recollection near to the truth."

"I believe these things were said, yes."

"What was the result! Miss Katz was all smiles and appreciation. You had refused something you did not like, yet made her feel the trouble she had taken was far from vain. According to your scene with your host, you should have immediately, when she offered you the marmalade, thrown it at her head, and damned her eye for attempting to thrust such poison down your throat! "

"Why, I —"

"I said you were a damn' fool, and I still stand by the remark."

"The matter of the marmalade was a very small thing."

"Surely," said he. "And to do a small thing well

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is in the capacity of almost any man. To refuse to marry Miss Dale is a big thing; and you have shown you were incapable of doing that even passably. Now, though you were willing to turn about and say you would reconsider the matter, I would feel it my first duty to rush away to her and relate the truth — that you have proved yourself but a small success! "

" You need have no fear of my reconsidering anything," I growled.

" I would not fear in that case," he retorted. " I would simply feel it presaged a ray of intelligence. You, of course, realize that if you return to Riverview, it will be the end of our treasure hunt? "

" I suppose so," I assented.

" And of your law reading? "

" Naturally."

" And of — Clarantine! "

" Not necessarily! "

" I think so," said Mr. Puncher, after a little pause, nodding his head and pursing his lips, as was his habit. " I most certainly think so! "

" Do you mean to say that you would take advantage of your intimacy with her to blacken my character? "

" I need not do that," he responded. " I can simply tell her what I know of you — a success in small things! That, I think, will be sufficient — and just to her, as well."

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"You — you — ! "

"I have reason to protect Clarantine," he said, "great reason! If you do not act in this affair as a gentleman should, I will certainly see that she wastes no time with one so unworthy."

"Our love will survive your derision, possibly! "

"Your love — might be better said, think you not? "

"Our love! " I answered boldly. "Hers and mine! I have held her in my arms — "

"What! " he shouted.

"I repeat — already have I held her in my arms! I have kissed her lips — "

"You lie! " cried the astrologer, springing to his feet. His face was livid, and his trembling fingers clutched the empty air as though ready to close about my throat. "You lie, you sullied braggart! Withdraw that assertion, or I'll — I'll — "

The poor old fellow was for a moment in a frenzy; but, strange to say, his words calmed rather than angered me. Had my statement been untrue doubtless the reverse would have been the result: but realizing that I should not have spoken of her as I had, regardless of truth, I bethought me the best step was to let him think it really was a lie — and thus clear her name of any further suspicion.

"Take back that lie! " he was saying, standing over me in a rage.

"I might," I said, soothingly, "if — "

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"No ifs! Do as I say!"

"Very well," I answered slowly. "In the heat of the moment I said more than I had intended. I withdraw anything which is not strictly true — and beg both your pardon, and the lady's."

"Hah!" he said, seating himself once more, and dipping in his snuff-box. "Some show of sense at last! Let it continue, I pray. No, Worrell, you can no more get the attention of this lady without my help than you can fly without wings. I don't wish to be too hard on you, but you have made a sad mistake in the way you have treated your uncle's request, and I want you to set it right for all our sakes. Come! Don't you see I am right?"

"But I can't go to this Dale person with the understanding he wishes. I can't do it!"

"All right! But tell him, at least, that you will attend this function in your honor; and say that you will do all in your power to forget this other woman."

"It isn't in my power to forget her for a minute!"

"Good! We can't do anything not in our power. But say that you will try, anyway."

"But it won't be of any use!"

"I don't care about that — and Littleton won't know about that!" the old fellow barked. "For heaven's sake, keep in his good graces by saying that you will try to do what he asks, even if you know it is impossible. Besides, it may be different when

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you see Miss Dale. She's not bad looking; and she has a bag of money, and social position. I have heard of men hit harder than you are, turning to a new love on these accounts — and living happily ever after, too."

"You don't know me," I said with confidence.

"No; and I don't want to know you, if you don't go this instant, and make peace with Amos Littleton."

"You may be right in that I should, Mr. Puncher, but I wouldn't know how to begin now."

"What would you say if I made an attempt to straighten everything up?" he asked. "I think I could make him see things in a better light; and then you might clinch the dispute with the proper word. How about it, eh? I can see him this afternoon, while you keep out of his road. And when he is mollified I will let you know, and you can accede to some tactful agreement. That is something I would not do for every one, Worrell. What do you say, now?"

"Was he very angry after our interview this morning?"

"Angry! I was near sending for a leech, sir! I thought he would have a seizure before he could tell me the meat of the matter. Angry! He upset his inkhorn pounding on the desk, and threatened my head with the sand-caster because I mentioned that you might mean well! Angry! God knows, I never wish to see him worse!"

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"Perhaps it is already too late?"

"Leave that to me. If it is so I will know when I broach the subject to him. Meantime, keep from his sight. I will get word to you somehow."

"And you think I must attend this — this fool function —"

"No doubt of that! I am going to say that you have reconsidered, and will be happy to go. Now, you can't tell! Perhaps you will be when the time comes!"

"But I won't be, and you know it."

"Doesn't it mean gold for us if you stay here? Gold to return to its lawful owners, and thwart the thieves? Doesn't it mean a start in the world for you, and Amos Littleton's help with the law? Doesn't it mean — Clarantine, if you go to this rout as you should?"

"No," said I. "Not necessarily. You have simply offered your good offices to bring us together, if I aid you in the search for the treasure. If I wished to, I could go to her at once — this very afternoon."

"Where? How?"

"To the house beside the prison."

"She is not there."

"She was there yesterday."

"How do you know? Did you call upon her there?"

"No. Nevertheless she was there yesterday."

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"She has gone away to-day," he answered, decisively.

"I could write her a letter, and send it by a servant," I suggested.

"And have it turned over to Colonel Broadfoot? I would think twice before I took that step, if only for your own skin's sake — and your family's reputation. No, Worrell; the thing for you to do is to leave it all in the hands of your humble servant."

"And trust in the stars," said I, thoughtfully.

"Which have never failed us yet," said the astrologer.

And after all, what could I do but thank the old fellow, and depart for a stroll? To go trailing to my parents, with a story of a loose woman coming between Littleton and me, would meet with a cold reception — and all within the space of five short days! Of course I could see that in the theory of the thing I was wrong. That was evident, for all my blind love of Clarantine. If one had seen and talked with the girl, as Puncher had done for instance, a better understanding of my infatuation would be had; but with matters as they were, a truce was wiser than a journey back to Riverview — even if only to stay near where she was.

And where was she, I wondered? Naturally, when I stepped from my uncle's door, I turned in the direction of the forge. Would she be waiting for me as

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yesterday? Puncher said that she was away. Whither? Also, how came he to know so soon? How foolish it seemed for me to promise my attendance at the coming rout, and my heart so far from my relatives' desire. Would any think for a moment, I wondered, if I would seriously consider Miss Dale for a bride? Would Clarantine think so, and she heard of it? Yet, how would she know that which was in my uncle's mind? It was when the clang of the hammer sang to me through the trees that I remembered the words of old Matthew: "The doings of the rich folks is gossip for the poor." Perhaps it would be noised about that this rich lady and I were to wed. What would my darling girl think then? I quickened my step, that I might be at her side the sooner.

It was a later hour than we had met before, but she was not come; nor had the smith seen aught of her that day. I rested in the doorway of the shed, while he swung his sledge, and gazed across the rolling pasture or among the trees. No slender figure danced into view, however, nor did a leather sedan chair swing down the lane. And finally the gray clouds which gathered all the day let down a gentle rain upon the fresh spring earth.

Was it because of this that Clarantine had not come? Or had she left the Town, as Puncher intimated? Had she already learned of the lawyer's plan for my marriage to another, and fled on that

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account? I turned to the kindly smith with a question.

"Mr. Wells, would you carry a note for me this afternoon?"

"Surely would I," he said. "And where does it go?"

"It goes to my love, whom I have met this two days at your smithy door. Her name I do not know for sure, except that she's known to some as Clarantine. She lives at the prison house, at Third and High Streets, in the City. Will you be kind enough to take this letter there?"

"And if she be from home?" he asked.

"Best that you bring it back," I told him.

"Or, perhaps leave it with her maid?" he asked.

"I fear she has no servant," said I.

"Ah, but she has," he answered. "She mentioned her the first time that she came to see me at my forge. If I remember right, she walked beside her mistress' chair; but so taken was I with the lady I noted her not."

"If you can see her maid, then, leave the letter. Otherwise destroy it undelivered."

Upon a scrap of paper from my pocket I thereupon wrote as follows:

MY DARLING:

In the first moment that I beheld you, love came to me. Now that I have touched your hand, and listened

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to your voice — for me the world holds nothing but your presence. I cannot live without our meetings. Let me learn by this good messenger where we may meet again.

So much have we learned of the treasure Johnny hid, that, with you at my side, it can not be a mystery long to us; but must I have you at my side to be inspired in the search.

Darling girl, I love you! Believe you naught but that! Say where I may come to you.

Until death — and after,

W. S.

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CHAPTER XIV

The Madness of Jasper Dean

THE smith returned with the assurance that he placed the letter in the hands of the lady's maid, but as the former was from home I must wait some time for a reply. At once I began to wonder if it was wise that I had written her. Perhaps she would think this a violation of her request not to attempt to learn of her. And when we met indeed, how was I to explain that all the time I knew who she was, and the place — alas! — she held in society, although I knew not her name? Mr. Puncher was evidently right when he warned me to leave arrangements with him; and yet I could not trust him as I would have liked — though we were bound together by the treasure hunt. Perhaps the stars knew best, after all!

The following day passed without a response, and the next day after that. On the third morning — and the date set aside for the Dale reception in my honor — Gorspill, the one-legged warder of the gaol, asked for me at the door of my foster uncle's home; and on being closeted alone with me said that if I

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wished to speak with the person to whom I had written I was to wait at the small door opening onto Third Street at the side of the prison. The time was set one hour after dusk upon the following Saturday evening.

He evidently knew nothing of the affair but what meager message he conveyed, so I merely thanked him, and turned him off with a gratuity. There was no doubt, however, that he recognized me at a glance. Had he been any other, I would like to have learned why I was compelled to wait five whole days; but it was enough that she had properly received and forgiven my impetuous outburst, and was not indifferent to my plea. I therefore must content my soul in patience against the designated hour — and my fond hope's fulfillment.

Meantime, I had much to do on that particular day. Having been forgiven to some extent by my kindly patron for my rude refusal to consider his desire, I had gone to extremes in the matter of adornment and wardrobe to prove my interest and acknowledge the importance of the occasion. Thus, even as fastidious an eye as his could find but little fault, I felt sure, when I emerged after an hour under the hand of his personal valet, shortly before the time set for our departure to the rout.

He and Puncher and Miss Katz were awaiting me in the library, all in their very best. Puncher was, it

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would seem, particularly grand, with a flowered waistcoat and a three-cornered cocked beaver, large enough to have fitted the head of an ale-keg. They all were impressed with my modishness, I could see; and Miss Katz insisted on my accompanying her in her chair, a reservation originally intended for Mr. Littleton, I believe. I detest a sedan, and would have preferred to walk, but of course could not offend the good lady.

Dean had been expected to join us, but for some unknown reason had not put in an appearance. This was so in keeping with his usual habit, however, that it was scarcely remarked upon — and shortly we were away, my host in the chair hired for Dean, Miss Katz and myself in the larger conveyance, and Puncher strutting pompously at our window, bowing and smiling to all we encountered, and flourishing a commodious mull.

The Dale residence stood in a grove of handsome chestnuts, well away from the noise and dust of the Town; but as we neared its imposing entrance to the drive we were soon caught and borne along by a throng all tending in the same direction. Never have I seen before so smart a gathering, or such a display of gallantry and breeding. On every hand was wealth, courtliness and manner: bowing gentlemen, powdered ladies, silk-clad striplings and mincing misses. It was impossible, I found, to refrain from an eager inspection of the occupants of other sedans as their bearers

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walked momentarily beside ours; thus many lovely ladies, who leaned from their open windows to smile at Miss Katz in welcome recognition, were apt — the younger ones, particularly — to include me in their favor.

Among the gentlemen in chairs, on foot, and on horseback, nodding in every direction it seemed, I noted the jet-black head of Major Broadfoot. He was walking with an older man close to our side, and his servant Moses was leading his spirited horse and the mount belonging to his companion away toward the stables.

Just at the moment of our approach there was some confusion in entering the gateway, owing to the egress of a carriage — the one vehicle wending in the opposite direction; and as we stopped for a few moments I alighted to join Mr. Puncher, Major Broadfoot and his friend, for a walk to the house. We were compelled to step aside — gingerly, owing to our light shoes and stockings — to allow this merging conveyance to pass us; and standing close to its side as it slowly threaded its way among the press of guests, I had a partial view of the interior. It was a light covered chaise, with two fine horses harnessed in tandem, and the curtains partly drawn so that the occupant or occupants — it would hold but two — were difficult of identification. But as it neared me the driver leaned close against the casement-glass at the side where

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I stood, his eyes grim and his face pale, but with that odd twisted sneer upon his lips which was in ill accord with his usual good nature. Resting across his knee I saw very clearly a heavy horse-pistol, and if there was a companion at his side the interior was too shaded to be certain.

The driver was Jasper Dean!

He guided his animals with skill and pertinacity through the jostle, and as he came abreast of where I stood with Mr. Puncher at my elbow, he looked into my eyes with a steadfast glare which held my attention until the chaise had passed. Instead of turning toward the City proper, he let his whip sing over his prancing cattle the moment they were clear away, and made toward Fairmount and the river there at an ever increasing speed.

Not knowing what to make of this I turned to my companion and found him with his great hat in his hand, and his usual ruddy countenance as white as had been Jasper's.

"In the name of God!" he cried, turning to me. "Follow that carriage! Follow, and kill that driver! Haste! Haste, I say —"

"What?" I ejaculated; but Major Broadfoot at his shoulder was quicker to understand, or had looked more intently at the inside of the chaise than had I.

"To horse!" he shouted, pushing toward his mount. "To horse, in the name of the King!"

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Everybody about us seemed suddenly crowding to reach our side, but Puncher grasped my shoulders and shoved me in the direction that the Major had taken.

"After him!" he panted, "and do not fail! This fellow Dean has suddenly gone mad! He has a figure bound in the boot of the chaise — and I think it is Mistress Dale!"

It was no time to stop and ask questions — nor to stop and answer them, although everyone, with the very best intentions in the world, insisted upon stopping the Major and me as we struggled toward the horses. When we finally reached them, Broadfoot sprang to the saddle. His groom was still holding the bridle of his friend's nag, so without apology I was on its back in unison with him, and close after the broad back of the scarlet-clad officer as he flew in pursuit.

Already there were others now hurrying to mount, but we had the start, and were soon as far in the lead of our following friends as was the carriage in the lead of us.

The conveyance was light, strong, and guided by a master hand. Already it had flashed about a turn in the road a good half mile ahead ere we could get in motion; but though Dean was lost to view for the time, it was scarcely possible for him to double back without detection, and we were in for a stern chase, it seemed. Coming to the turn he had taken, we also flew to the right; and but a short distance before us lay a trap

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of which he doubtless was aware, and expected thereby to gain time. In front of us the roadway suddenly forked, and each branch led through a thickly wooded country wherein we could see absolutely nothing of the carriage.

Had I been alone I would certainly have hesitated and wondered in which direction he had flown. Not so the Major, however. With a nod to the right again, he scarcely slackened speed as he dashed about the signpost, and shortly we were engulfed among the trees.

"How do you know we are heading correctly?" I shouted, drawing up at his side. He was reaching to unbuckle his saddle holster and extract a primed pistol, but he spoke over his shoulder in reply.

"The pools of water in this road were muddy and in the other one, clear. Their wheels have churned it up but a few minutes past. Have you a pistol with you? No? Be careful then, for Dean must be madly desperate."

On we spurred, with no further conversation; but I noted the Major's brow grow blacker and blacker, and his jaw jut out in menace as we flew along.

There came a break in the trees — an open field — then we whirled through another coppice. Away from that we broke, and then, far ahead, where the road dipped into a fertile valley, we saw the plunging vehicle.

Our horses must have felt the lust of pursuit, and

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they responded nobly. My confederate's mount was known the City 'round, but the one I had borrowed was not a bit behind it. Three minutes passed, and we were holding our own with the fleeing tandem. We were gaining! We were gaining fast! When we ourselves had reached the spot where first the quarry had been sighted, we had won full half the distance separating us! One final effort — and we were so close that our cries must have been heard.

The carriage began now to plunge from side to side of the road, and most evidently was slacking in its speed. So sharply it came to a halt, indeed, that I was unprepared, and sped too near to it. The Major prudently drew rein, and raised his weapon in preparation. There was a small glass aperture in the rear of the chaise, but a curtain prevented anything being seen thereby. Suddenly this was smashed with a blow, and a pistol was thrust through, and discharged.

It was at me that the ball was aimed, evidently, but directed too low. Instead it pierced my panting horse — and he and I rolled together on the sod.

Instantly with the report, the vehicle took up again its mad career, while the Major futilely fired into the cloud of dust its departure raised, and sprang down to learn if I was injured.

This was not the case, as I had fallen free of the kicking beast; so with a shout that he would continue, he remounted quickly, and took up the chase alone.

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Much disappointed at being thus driven from the race — to say nothing of the loss of so fine a horse — I sat down dejectedly upon a knoll hard by, and made what repair in my splendid attire was possible after my hard ride and harder fall. Little being possible in this regard, for where I was not mud and tears I was delicately greened from the grass, I decided to await either the Major's return or being overtaken by some friends in the chase, and remained where I was.

A quarter of an hour had gone, perhaps, and the poor animal was still thrashing in the mud with no means at hand to put him beyond his misery, when a "View hollo!" showed me half a dozen others had found the right path at last. They gathered about me in excitement as I related what had occurred, and after mercifully putting a ball into the fallen horse, gave me a leg up behind a light-riding member of the party.

On we went, yet at barely half the gait the Major and I had attained; and owing to its double load our horse was now ever falling in the rear. I thought of Puncher, and his "Do not fail!" and I felt if he could see me now his regard would have sunk even lower than it already was. Truly, I was making a very sorry record in all I did at Littleton's house, despite my earnest effort.

We were turning down beside a creek now, flowing between high banks, and at our side there lay a small clearing among the bush, which had been plowed but

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not yet planted. Toward the center of this field I saw a white object, half hidden by the furrows in the earth; and I leaped from my perch and hurried toward the spot.

Even before I reached the place, instinct told me what I would find; so crying out, the others were just behind me when I came upon him. I stooped and turned him gently over. His handsome suit was scarcely mussed except where it had touched the soil; and his coat, for some reason was laid at one side, with a lace-edged kerchief he had carried to the rout.

Directly upon his brow where his jet-black hair grew to a point there was a bullet-mark. His eyes were open, staring at the sky as now he lay, but he was dead. He had his faults, this Marcus Broadfoot, Major of the King's troop in the Colony of America; but he had his virtues, too. And he died in a righteous cause, like a hero and a gentleman.

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CHAPTER XV

The Fulfillment of a Prophecy

I SAT on the furrowed earth, with the poor still head upon my knees, while one in the party returned with the tidings and the rest took over the chase. The sun shone brightly overhead, but it had no warmth for the figure at my side. The air blew sweet from the south, but it scarcely stirred the long black locks of the dead. Over his form there lay the scarlet coat of his Sovereign, laid like a pall to hide his gala dress. His countenance was calm, his eyes now closed; intead of five-and-twenty he bore the look of age. How strange it seemed, as there I gazed into his paling face, that now all time had ceased to be for him. Had he looked forward to the warmth of June, the budding flowers, and the robin's song? I could but hope, and move my lips in prayer, that where he'd gone the Spring might last forever.

At length came several people with a carriage, accompanied by some of the men from his command; and lifting him tenderly within, we walked beside the conveyance to the Town. It was understood that he was to be taken directly to his brother's house, and I would have shown him all respect by going thither;

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but so wrought up was I after all which had passed, and so bedraggled and besmirched, I turned to my uncle's home when we approached there, and betook me to my room.

Changing my clothes for clean attire, I took some heavy Hollands to calm my nerves, and went to the library in the hope of seeing one of the household. Miss Katz had remained at the Dale residence with Mr. Littleton, I understood from a servant; but Puncher had returned, changed his clothing likewise, and departed at least an hour before.

I sat and pondered upon the whole terrible affair: Dean's wild abduction of our prospective hostess; his flight, and attempt on my life; and finally the killing of the Major. I naturally wondered much if the astrologer was right in his surmise that Miss Dale was in the carriage, and if so, for what reason did Jasper drive away with her. The man was desperate, evidently, or he would never have fired upon me. And the Major's red coat laid to one side with his kerchief? There was a question, too.

It was growing dark when I heard the front door close, and Mr. Puncher entered the library. I was upon him with a score of questions instantly, but he brushed them all aside for a candle, some liquor, and his boot-jack; when he went at me for the details in which I had taken part, and it was some time ere I learned all that I wished.

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Concisely, the chaise had broken down toward Three Tuns Tavern, and had been overtaken by the pursuers. Dean, evidently realizing that all was up with him in this escapade, had returned quietly to the City, strapped to a horse and bound to prevent escape. Miss Dale had been discovered in the boot of the carriage, just as Puncher had noted her, tied like a sack in some coats and cloaks, and frightened almost to the point of distraction. She was a frail girl, it would seem, and the experience had nearly robbed her of reason. She knew nothing of the Major's death and was not told at once. He had been an admirer of hers, and while she had never encouraged him further than common courtesy demanded, he likely set great store that the rescuing of her might promote his suit. It was for this, no doubt, that he had run such ill-advised and fatal hazard.

Miss Dale had been alone in the hallway of her home with Dean, speaking on a subject which she did not reveal, when suddenly grabbing up these cloaks from a rack nearby, and smothering her cries and her person in their folds he bore her to the carriage. Of nothing more was she clearly aware until her rescue. Dean himself would say absolutely nothing. Puncher and Littleton had hurried at once to the gaol when they learned of his arrival, but he had refused to see either. Puncher had then returned, while the lawyer had remained in the hope that he might be of service in some

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direction, — whether for or against Jasper, Puncher seemed rather vague.

The lawyer returned late that night, crushed and dispirited. I met him at the horse-block, the rest of the house having retired, and brought him a glass of wine to his apartment, for which he seemed grateful. There was, it seemed, nothing new in the case. Miss Katz had sent a message that she would not return that night, but remain with her charge, who was doing as well as might be expected after such an ordeal.

Uncle Littleton had not seen Jasper, but reports from the prisoner indicated that he was taking his arrest and prospect of a speedy trial, calmly. So far he had made no statement to anyone, nor had Colonel Broadfoot, the brother of the slain man. Something had always told me that there was little love lost between these two representatives of the Belfast Broadfoots; and future revelations proved me right. It was only natural, however, that the military governor of the gaol would look with abhorrence upon the slayer of his kin, regardless of any difference in the family. I wondered if he would seek to make Jasper's brief incarceration as unbearable as might lie within his power. It is to his credit, or to the credit of the girl with whom his name was linked, that he took no undue advantage of his position.

My host retired, and I was about to follow his example, when a light under the door of the star-gazer's

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room bade me rap for a moment's gossip. He was evidently in deep thought as I entered, with his head bowed and his hand shading his eyes, so that I thought for an instant I had encroached upon a natural and pardonable emotion. When he raised his head I realized I was mistaken, however. He was instead his usual staid and philosophical self. I related the little I had learned from the lawyer. He nodded with interest.

"Dean is mad," he said, finally. "Stark, staring, Bedlam mad! But like all madmen he has a reason prompting his actions. I had suspected for a long time that he was in love with Miss Dale. Amos threw him at her head when he first came here, but she sensibly discouraged his attentions. Finally he also appeared to lose interest in her — but that was just a pose. His running about with this one and that one — particularly this hussy at the gaol, — was an effort to smother his infatuation; but it merely fanned the flame. The more he sported with such wanton lights o' love, the brighter in contrast must her purity have shone."

"You are insulting and maligning the woman I — "

"Enough! " he interrupted. "If that subject is opened to-night you may learn something which will alter even your prejudiced mind very materially."

"I fear to hear no truth! " I said.

"No," he replied, pensively. "It is I who fear to

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tell it to you now." Then, after a greater pause, "Of what were we just speaking?"

"I was wondering, do you think that this abduction was with a view to possible matrimony?"

"I doubt if Dean was clear as to just where it would lead. The foundation of his rash act was jealousy, I would say."

"Has she then met some one whom she is willing to encourage?"

"I suppose so. In fact, I am almost certain of it; but he is unworthy of her, so Littleton still has hope for your suit. I suppose you are relieved that, after all, there was no reception?"

"I did not wish to be placed in a false position before this lady, certainly; but you cannot think I would welcome the death of Broadfoot and Dean's arrest, to prevent me from being presented to her!"

"No, no!" said Puncher. "I spoke without thought. Miss Dale is most attractive, you will find. The Major was hard smitten, you know. He gave his life for his love, evidently. It is the most that anyone could do."

"Had I been aware all along that she lured so many suitors, I would have hesitated less to meet her. We usually find a maid with such wealth, whose guardian seeks about for husbands, has little but the money itself to recommend her. I would have been safe among as many as you indicate."

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"Possibly," said Mr. Puncher, rising. "Possibly! I think I will now go to what rest I may with your permission. By-the-way, I understand that the Major's funeral is on Monday, in the morning. The trial will open by Wednesday at the latest. You will be called as a witness, I expect."

I had not thought of that before, and the prospect of giving testimony which might aid to incriminate Jasper was dreadful. I voiced my thoughts upon that, and the astrologer nodded in sympathetic appreciation of my situation.

"You can do nothing but tell the truth, Worrell. Amos Littleton remarked not so long ago in my hearing, that what Jasper Dean had done, Jasper Dean must shoulder. We must all adopt the same attitude, I suppose."

And with that we parted for the night.

The Major's funeral took place upon the following Monday, being attended by his command and many notables of the City. I was present at the side of the astrologer. While I had not known it before, the Broadfoots, it would seem, were Roman Catholic in belief, and the services were held from St. Joseph's in Willing's Alley. There was no burying-ground connected with this sweet old church, and no lot had been provided for his burial elsewhere; but through the kindness of three gentlemen of his faith, Captain Barry, and Messrs. Willcox and Kauffman, he was laid

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to rest in St. Mary's ground, along the Fifth Street wall.

Two days later the trial of Jasper Dean opened.

The court was crowded, but what looked to become a sensational hearing soon developed into a trite trying of the case. Dean refused to plead, and maintained his silence. The Court entered for him a denial of guilt. But remarkably few witnesses were called. Miss Dale was not among them. She knew but through others of the fatal termination of the Major's pursuit, and could give no direct story bearing upon his death.

Puncher first told of seeing Dean in the chaise with the bound girl at his feet. Then I was called to take up the tale of following the carriage. Dean's eyes were steadily upon me as I took the stand to speak, and he nodded in evident appreciation of my carefully phrased testimony. Where I could I softened my version of the adventure; stating simply that he had discharged his pistol at my horse, which had immediately gone down. I might have told that he aimed directly at me, for I felt that he had. I then spoke of the finding of the body, and its removal to the Town.

Colonel Broadfoot was called to swear to the identity of the deceased. Others told how they had followed further and overtaken the prisoner. In the boot of the conveyance had been found Broadfoot's and Dean's pistols, both having been discharged. On being cap-

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tured, and told of the death of the Major, Dean had said in the presence of three witnesses, "Yes, I know he is dead."

With this most damaging testimony the case for the Crown rested.

Dean again refused to make any defence or statement, although he was urged to do so most importunately from the Bench.

When there seemed nothing for the jury but to retire for deliberation, Amos Littleton arose and begged leave to address the Court. Then, in a most eloquent and at times a passionate and moving appeal, he implored the judges to consider the purely circumstantial aspect of the evidence, and the fact that the suspected man was, by his silence, shielding this pure and innocent lady whose name was unfortunately dragged into the case. He spoke of his close personal contact with the prisoner; of his regard for him, built on his worth as a citizen and as a man; of Jasper's previous good record, and his host of friends. He dwelt long and earnestly on one phase of the evidence submitted which no one could clear to the satisfaction of himself; — that after Dean had shot my horse he had not paused to reload his weapon, but had at once whipped his animals to a gallop. When, therefore, had he prepared for the slaying, and the Major thundering directly behind him? He could not draw to the roadside and request the Major to await this preparation! He could not have

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thrown aside his reins, and recharged while his steeds were in full gallop! There were but two pistols; Dean's, which had been discharged at me, and one identified as belonging to the dead man. Would it seem likely, that, providing the prisoner possessed two such weapons, he would have cast one away and not the other? Or secured the pistol of his victim to carry about as evidence against himself?

It was pitiful to me to watch the man, with ringing voice and easy gesture, striving in behalf of the life of one in whom he had but little faith. And while there sounded a note of sincerity in all that he said, Jasper Dean's escapades were too well known to be brushed aside by mere words. Littleton overtalked, I think, fearing to cease while he knew the sympathy he desired to arouse was withheld, and he left the court-room immediately at the close of his appeal.

The verdict was given with promptness, but with becoming solemnity. We rose at the bidding of the crier, when the sentence was pronounced. The windows of the court house were opened to the warm air, and the stir of the market-place and the cries of the boys at play in the grounds of the meeting-house opposite mingled with the voice of the judge.

"Guilty — and to be executed upon the following Monday."

"Ah, well!" said Mr. Puncher with a sigh, as he stood by my side. "He was born to be hanged."

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CHAPTER XVI

The Meeting at the Prison

THE trial of Jasper Dean had taken all of Wednesday, and until noon upon the following day. Directly after he had been returned to his cell succeeding his hearing the sentence, I made an appeal to him, through a warder, to see and talk with me if but for a moment. This he refused to do; but as my message was carried by Crutcher Gorspill — evidently the only turnkey in the gaol other than the military guard — I was not even certain that Jasper had received my request.

The following day dragged by like a month. Miss Katz had not yet returned, and Mr. Littleton was busy on some form of appeal to lay before Governor Penn, which never, I believe, received consideration. The astrologer was also absent on business of evident importance — just how momentous I did not learn until late on Saturday afternoon. Jasper had refused to see any of us, or his keeper had refused in his name. Had I been going to my own execution I doubt if the passing minutes could have contained a greater despair. The news of his hanging had spread about the

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City, and none came to disturb our hopeless calm. The curtains of each window were kept closed, and servants trod with silent step, as though the man who lay, vigorous and quick in his dungeon to-day, already was a corpse beneath our roof.

On Saturday, following a faint show of dining, Mr. Littleton left to present his petition, and Mr. Puncher came to share a vigil of misery in my room. I had scarcely seen him since the verdict, but he seemed to bear up better under the strain than did the rest.

"Anything new?" he enquired, when he was seated and armed with his snuff-box.

"Nothing — unless Governor Penn will harken to Uncle Littleton to-day. That can be our only hope now."

"It's a vain hope, Worrell. The Governor represents the King; and Dean's disloyalty to his Sovereign is notorious."

"Yes. But perhaps for the sake of the petitioner! Mr. Littleton's support of the Crown must be a by-word."

"True," said Puncher, thoughtfully, "as you say, it is a by-word — but is it a fact?"

"Is — is what a fact?" I asked in amazement.

"Is Littleton's intense loyalty a fact, or simply a state of mind?"

"It is both!" I said.

"Not necessarily," argued the star-gazer. "Not

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necessarily! Take his defense of Jasper: that was a state of mind, but it wasn't a fact. Jasper killed Broadfoot, and none of us in our own hearts doubt it. We don't run about and say so, of course, but we think so none the less, if we think of that end of the matter at all. Now, if Amos had spoken the truth before the Court last Thursday, it might have sounded something like this: 'I loved this lad's father, and I am the cause of his being in this country, and feel my responsibility. In spite of his persistent trend against what I regard as practical, sensible and tactful behavior, I love him. I know that he is guilty, but give him back in my charge and I will try again to make him into something which experience has shown me is practically impossible.' Worrell, the fact in the case is Littleton's affection — and his state of mind is his plea to save the boy on the grounds of innocence and good citizenship — both of which he knows to be false."

"And he failed," I said, with a sigh.

"Yes," said Puncher; "he failed. But he succeeded in showing that his love for his fellow-man was too deep to be altered by the crime of murder. He talks all day of King and Parliament and obedience to law. He talks as he advises, but not necessarily as he feels. If a man stole your horse, sir, and you went to Amos Littleton for advice, he would counsel you to sue for its recovery. If, however, the same thief stole

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his horse, he would likely hunt him up, knock him down, and lead the thief's horse home beside his own! A state of mind has made him thoroughly legal, but he is intensely human — in fact! "

"Which is suggesting that he is almost hypocritical — deceitful at least."

"Not so. A hypocrite would not believe in that which he advocates, and Amos believes thoroughly in the law. A deceiver would attempt to conceal his true feelings, yet here again he associates with the foremost of Tories. Whom did he have at dinner a few days past? Master Dickenson! With whom does our host walk about and chat with much of his spare time? Master Franklin! Who calls frequently at his office for advice? Reed, and Mifflen, and Willing, and Morris. Are any of them King's men? Not one! "

"True, but he damns Adams and Patrick Henry? "

"And quite right, too. They cry for rebellion! Revolution! That meat is too strong for good citizens — yet! "

"And ever will be, I pray."

"Just so prays Amos Littleton — sitting under Parson Duché, who, by-the-way, is chafing now to cut from his prayers the English King, and replace him by a certain local governor. No, Worrell; our good friend feels that the best counsel he can give to others is to stand by the old Ruler and bow to his laws; but

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what he thinks is right for him to do is something neither you nor I can know for certain."

"You feel that the Governor knows this, and that already Jasper is doomed?"

"I fear so. I did what I could, but with no success. I called together those whom I could of the Sons of Liberty, and implored them to take up his case, and use force if necessary to win him free. They refused. Eager for trouble, they still lack that spark which will set them all aflame. Jasper's death will not supply it. I then set to work to locate the hidden money immediately, that it might be used as a bribe to save him. What think you of that scheme?"

"Do you know the value of this treasure?"

"Yes. Twenty thousand pieces of eight — in gold!"

"It is a fortune!"

"No less. And if found at once, I think I could secure the consent of the donor to use it for this purpose."

"And if you could not secure this consent — ?"

"Would you have me too fastidious in such an emergency?"

"For what was the money given originally?"

"To the cause of liberty, and the frustration of tyranny!"

"Scarcely could the saving of Jasper be brought under either heading," I said thoughtfully.

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"If you had such money of your own, would you not give of it to save a friend's life?"

"The amount is great, yet no man may reasonably place a price upon the life of another. Yes! If that is your question alone, I would think the money well spent, but —"

"But —" said Mr. Puncher. "Do you hesitate at the sum required and call yourself a friend of the man?"

"I might raise, by my promise alone in the time allowed, a quarter of that sum. If this will aid it will be gladly given. But to rob my Country of a farthing to save a score of men — ! In that I hesitate."

Mr. Puncher paused, and then rising, grasped me by the hand.

"For your generous offer many thanks, Worrell. If money can be used I may call upon you. As to the rest — that question must go before a better judge of loyalty to ideals. At least, your ideas coincide with mine."

"Regarding the whereabouts of this treasure —" and I told him of the verse in the Bible (although I did not mention that it was Clarantine who had aided the discovery), and also gave him a copy of the words Matt's Johnny had written on the prison wall. He thanked me, and said he would dwell upon the matter later with interest.

"I am going to the library now, to be on hand when

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Amos returns from the Governor," he said. "I feel certain that he will receive no response to his appeal, and will need all of our affection and support to bear up under the blow."

"Should I not be there also?"

"To be frank — no. At such a time perhaps old friends are to be preferred. Drop in sometime later upon us, and you will know at a glance how he has fared."

Again pressing my hand warmly, he left me alone with my thoughts.

Twilight crept upon the City as I sat musing at my open window. To-night was the time set for me to meet my love at the entrance of the gaol. Should I keep the appointment? I had pondered the question ever since Jasper Dean had heard his fate pronounced. If there was anything — if there could be anything — in which I might aid him or aid those who suffered at his sentence, I had decided it were best to postpone this rendezvous until a more fitting — a more carefree — hour. But now, it would seem, no duty nor necessity for my presence deterred me.

I decided to remain in my room until the last possible moment, lest I should be called; and if nothing prevented, I would hasten to the place selected, and return as promptly as I might tear myself from her presence. Whether I came or no, she would understand. Of course she knew all of the tragedy, and

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would appreciate my position. I dressed carefully for the tryst, and completing my toilet sat waiting until it was hard upon the hour of meeting. Then casting a dark cloak over my shoulders, and carrying a light cane, I slipped from the house unseen, and made for the little door of the prison wherein poor Jasper lay.

The distance was not far, but I took deliberate pains to avoid the mud and water which overran the streets; and it was later than I had expected when I reached an angle of the grim building, and scanned the now dark walls for the obscure entrance — and possibly a slim figure waiting there. I found that the little door was not as easy to locate as I had imagined. I walked quite a way about the structure, and would have passed it in the dark had it not been for the flutter of a mantle worn by one who stood, half concealed, in a small recess far hidden from the street whence I had come.

With a tender cry of greeting I stepped hurriedly forward, but instinct alone, — it was here too dark for recognition, — told me it was not Clarantine who beckoned me. The woman put out her hand and felt for and gripped mine in the darkness — holding it close.

"You are one who has an appointment here?" she whispered.

"I am."

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"Hold tight my hand and let me lead you. It is not safe to show a light here now. Silence, if you please — and bend low, that you do not strike your head."

I did as I was bidden, and we passed through the small opening into a passage of corresponding dimensions. I am not such a large man, but I was compelled to stoop more than a foot below my usual height, and my shoulders touched the sides of the corridor, which was more like a tunnel than the entry to a building.

After proceeding for a few paces my guide paused, and groping for a moment she kindled a light, ignited a taper, and turned upon me with a smile. Her cloak, as black as the night without, had a hood drawn over her darker hair; but this she tossed back with a movement of her head, and in the glow of the candle she held I saw her very distinctly.

Her face was absolutely strange to me, but this bore no marvel. Likely, thought I, she was some servant sent to lead me to her mistress. Even, perhaps, the maid who had received my letter from the hands of old Matthew Wells. She seemed surprised at my want of recognition, and the smile she had flashed faded from her eyes and eventually from her lips, although her features still held to a grinning masklike distortion, free from either charm or mirth.

"Do you not know me?" she asked, of a sudden.

"No," said I, politely. "But if I have seen you

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before, let my excuse for my lack of observation be my desire to meet at once the lady I came here to seek."

She paused, and half smiled again to herself in a fashion far from merry; and in this act I thought I had some vague recollection of seeing such a look before. Further than that I could not remember. However, that was of small importance.

"Shall we advance?" I asked, for the place wherein we stood was damp, and the air heavy. Also, upon the sides of the stone walls were chains dangling from occasional staples — rusty and broken, but still menacing. Before us I noted a narrow pair of steps descending. Drawing the hood about her head again, she preceded me upon these steps, and with no look behind her, on through a maze of dank cellars and queer passages, until we ascended once more by a better stairway to a very narrow oak door. Before she lifted the latch of this she hesitated once more; and then removing the cloak entirely from her tall full form, she turned as before with the light held before her.

"You still do not remember me?" she asked.

"I deeply regret —" said I, with a bow; but she cut me short by thrusting the taper into my hand and bidding me stand until she had smoothed back her heavy hair with her fingers, and dusted her skirts with her hand. Then, with a slight shrug of her shoulders, she opened the door before us, and I crept through

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after her into a small room, brightly illuminated, where sat a man at a table, writing.

"Well, here we are!" she said, in a voice which sounded a note of exasperation. "Here we are! And the great booby came along like a duck on a string — and doesn't even remember me! So you win the two pound note, Carlos."

"Good!" said the man, rising. "That letter was for the other woman all the time, I've told you. I know his kind, my dear, and he probably knows yours. Well, Master Sloan; if you don't remember this lady-friend of mine whom you last made eyes at in the woods by the forge of old Matthew Wells, perhaps you remember me!"

"What do you mean, Colonel Broadfoot, by this piece of impudence?" I demanded.

"Sit down, Sloan," he replied. "I mean to find out just why you killed my brother, the Major!"

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CHAPTER XVII

Twenty Thousand Pieces of Eight

"SIT down, Sloan!" said the Colonel.

I noted his grim expression, and the pistol on the table before him; also the shuffling tramp of the sentry below the one small window the apartment contained. I looked all about me deliberately before I made the slightest move. The single visible entrance was at the far side of the room, to reach which I must pass directly before him. Behind me was a wide chimneyplace and mantel. The door from which the girl and I had emerged was vanished — hidden somewhere in the stonework there. Knowing now that it existed possibly I might discover its secret again, but to make a dash at this time in the hope of so doing ere he brought his weapon into play was suicidal. I sat.

Meantime the woman at my side relieved me quietly of my cloak, hat and cane. I thanked her through habit for so doing, at which she nodded and took a chair by him at the table; watching me — watching me much as a sleek cat watches a trapped mouse, — and occasionally licking her wanton lips to a brighter red, and smiling her broad, mirthless, lascivious smile.

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"Sloan," continued the military governor of the prison, "I first want you to thoroughly understand in what situation you are now placed; and following that, I want the truth from you."

"I did not come here to gossip," I said, casually; but I was most uneasy beneath the best show of indifference I could display.

"First," he continued, ignoring my interruption, "your entry to this building, or to this group of buildings, is absolutely unknown to any but ourselves — and Gorspill. If it were my desire, — I do not say this as a threat, understand, but merely as a fact, — I could have you chained in one of the dungeons below, the very existence of which is scarcely known, and as I am sailing for England on Monday next, might overlook the fact that so it had been done — until in some months, or perhaps I may say weeks — hence — "

"Evidently you are turning Indian," I said.

"You understand me well enough at all events," he continued. "Now, Jasper Dean has confessed to me the truth of my brother's killing. I know that it was you who caused his untimely death, and that this poor Irish lad is innocent."

"Did Jasper tell this to you?"

"Who else?"

"Did he say that I murdered Major Broadfoot?"

"Certainly! He kept quiet during the trial, he says, thinking that you would take that opportunity

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to make your escape; but as you have remained, in the evident faith that your high connections will save you from the result of your crime, and that he will be compelled to go quietly to the gallows — an innocent man! — he has decided to bend his tongue to the truth, regardless of whom it may implicate! "

" Have you faith in the lies he utters? "

" So much that I call them by still another name."

" If this yarn were proved true," I asked thoughtfully, " is it not too late to save Dean from execution? He is to die within thirty-eight hours, you know? "

" I might, or might not, get the legal machinery working in that time; but I could certainly set him in a small boat on the river, after dark, and allow him to conceal himself elsewhere until proper arrangements were made. This, naturally, refers to anybody in similar situation."

" Even myself, say I were wrongly accused of a crime "

" Yes. Unfortunately I have no jurisdiction over you, save that which I think natural to appropriate toward the murderer of my brother. If you can show that Dean is really lying, why you are free to depart with my profuse apologies."

" May I first speak to Jasper? "

" I do not think that would be wise."

" May I see for a moment the lady who was the cause of my coming here? "

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He hesitated, and looked down upon the cloth before him for an instant; and then turned to the woman at his side for assistance. She stilled any words he might have uttered with a touch upon his arm, and answered for him with an interrogation.

"What is the lady's name, may I ask?"

"Can there be so many here that you do not know?" I parried.

"There is none here but me."

"Then who bade you wait for me in the little doorway yonder?"

"Miss Dale!"

"Who!"

"Why, Miss Dale, to whom you wrote."

"I wrote to Miss Dale? I!"

She seemed uncertain whether to continue her insistence of this preposterous assumption longer. Finally she made a further inquiry.

"Did not Miss Dale know that you were coming here to-night?"

"Absolutely and positively not!" I retorted.

"Then I was in error," she replied, and smiled.

"Pardon me," I retorted again, being angered by this; "but it was here that you lied. The Colonel has said that but we three and Gorspill knew of my arrival here to-night. You intercepted Clarantine's letter —"

"Clarantine!" she whispered in parenthesis.

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" — and replied for her! Do not deny it! "

" Deny it! I would that when you aided me across the brook, when you were going to her, that I had had you both to drown within that pool! "

The governor of the prison interrupted here.

" The lady to whom you wrote, Mr. Sloan, is not here — nor ever has been. You are here, and the method used to secure your presence is of little moment. If it will ease your mind in any way I can assure you, however, that aside from ourselves no one was instrumental in any manner to your — your — may we say capture! — regardless of what name or names were used to draw you to this place."

" Thank you," said I, and my heart gave a great bound of joy. " That is the kindest thing I have heard since my arrival."

" I trust it is but the first of many," he said, rising. " Would you be good enough to move your chair closer to the fireplace, Mr. Sloan? Thank you. I wish to be free to walk about a little as I speak. I have a story to place before you. May I ask that you hearken with an open mind? "

" You have forced the audience," said I. " I can do little else but listen."

" True. But let us have no attempt of bodily mischief, for if you did but get the better of me for an instant — which is quite possible — soldiers would be summoned, and I must finally win. Listen carefully,

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then, and interrupt me little, for I will tell you of your sorry romance."

"Speak!" I indicated.

"Some months ago," began the Colonel, pacing the short length of the room slowly as he talked, his eyes upon the floor, "you met and loved Miss Dale, the heiress. Do not start! I have had knowledge of this for some time. You loved her, I say, nor can any blame be laid to you for that; but she did not return your admiration, evidently, and parting, she returned here to Philadelphia; and plunging into a whirl of social gaiety, shortly had you entirely out of mind."

"Where was this meeting, may I ask?"

"I do not know, but that is immaterial. Somewhere near your home, likely. Dean also had tried his hand at winning her affections, but it was my brother Marcus who finally received the promise of her hand. We were not close as brothers, the Major and I, but there were some matters in which I had his confidence. I never saw a man more thoroughly enslaved by a passion than was he, nor have I ever seen a maid more worthy of its reception."

As he paused, I noted a sneer twist the features of the woman at the table. His hesitation was evidently one of emotion at the thought of the dead — and yet I doubted him in the sincerity of this as in all things.

"You followed her to the Town shortly," he con-

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tinued. "You were not, if I must say so to your face, received with favor. Dean had conquered his love for her, and had become her friend. He, however, was in a multitude of troubles in many directions, and needed money, as always. You, knowing that but a few days or weeks intervened before her betrothal to my brother, prevailed upon this misled Irish lad to abduct the girl for you, that you might gain her in marriage by either force or fear. I regret that I am of a necessity compelled to make mention of such truths, but so it must be. Both of us recognize the urgency of this if we are to get anywhere, do we not?"

"It is an interesting legend," I replied. "I cannot see yet that we will get anywhere with it, but pray continue if you enjoy the recital."

"You hoped to force this marriage, I say, because you realized that at the rout last week the betrothal was likely to be made known. Jasper acted for you, and bore away the maid. You were to follow, and played your part promptly; but here my poor unsuspecting brother spoiled your plans. He followed the chaise, also!"

"He led in the pursuit, to be quite candid," said I.

"Just so," said the Colonel. "My dear brother Marcus did what those who knew him best would have expected. Free from deception himself, he thought not to look for it in others. He led in the pursuit, as

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you say, — and because you were free from any but yourself — because you saw an opportunity to remove this rival and lay the suspicion elsewhere — you shot him in cold blood! "

"That is nonsense! Preposterous nonsense! Why, my horse was down with a ball from Dean's pistol a good three miles from where I found the Major's body. We parted when he continued the chase, and I, unhorsed, was forced to wait for our tardy friends! "

"So you told at the trial," he said, evenly. "It was an interesting tale to cover all the points of which we knew; but it had a doubtful ring even then. Now, in the light of Dean's confession, it will not do! "

"It is the truth! " I stammered angrily.

"Come! Come! " he replied. "Let us have no more of this. If my brother led in the pursuit, as you yourself say, why was not his horse killed instead of yours? No! There are a score of discrepancies about the story. Let me tell you just what took place, and you will know how much I have learned of the affair. At the spot where your horse was found — still struggling in its death agonies, remember, although you claim almost forty minutes had elapsed since it received its wound — you and my brother overtook the chaise. Dean immediately surrendered at the point of your pistol, and the Major's. Fearing to have Dean return, lest he inform against you regarding the abduction, you called my brother to you and pistoled him

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through the brain ere he could defend himself. Quickly loading the body in the coach beside the fainting girl, you drove until you reached a newly plowed field; and leaving Dean there with instructions to bury the body in the freshly turned earth, and hasten forward as rapidly as possible, you returned to the scene of your crime. Why did you return? To make certain that no trace of blood lay thereabout. On arrival you were aghast to find that very condition. What could you do? Any moment the men slower in pursuit might be upon you. The answer was evident, and, let me say, ingenious. You shot your mount on the same spot, that the sign of a bloody struggle might be obliterated; and the echo of the discharge had scarcely died away when the expected party arrived."

"Where is my pistol?" I asked.

"Somewhere in the brush and weeds within hurling distance of the spot."

"Who fired Dean's and the Major's weapons?"

"Dean admits he did so to frighten his tired horses into greater speed."

"You forget, Colonel, that it was I who first saw your brother's body in the field?"

"Forget! Certainly not! Who would be more likely, you knowing exactly where it had been left?"

"But according to you, Jasper was to bury him!"

"Yes, but he feared to linger at the gruesome work."

"I wish I knew," said I, after a pause, "whether

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you are making this up as you walk about, or whether Jasper really told you."

"I know nothing except what I have gotten from Dean."

"And you believe this version?"

"Without question!"

"That is at least direct, if uncomplimentary. Now, Colonel, under the circumstances the proper thing for you to do is this; release Dean to-night, and allow him to escape by the river as you before suggested. Then put me on trial for the crime. Meantime I will remain quietly in gaol. If a jury decides that I killed Major Broadfoot, you will have the joy of hanging me."

He walked the room several times before he replied. When he did so he stopped to look me in the eye with a sly smile.

"Really — really, Mr. Sloan, but I expected something better of you than that," he said. "So you wish to be tried with the chief witness against you at large, eh? I doubt, as do you, that with Dean away we could get a very fair trial."

"Dean might return for the trial if he is so certain of his own innocence."

"Yes, Dean might return for the trial, but do you think it likely?"

"I do not care to be hanged without a trial, Colonel. In fact I am not certain I desire that honor even with

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a hearing. But if you are so sure Jasper is telling the truth I should think you might arrange some way in which he might be saved, both now, and eventually."

"I have some such plan, if you will agree to it."

"I? I will agree to anything which will lift this shadow from Jasper, and the family generally."

"Fine! And it is so simple, too. You will fall in with it, I know. You see, my position is a hard one because I am to be relieved of my command here at noon on Monday, and am returning on a troopship which sails that afternoon for Liverpool. Now, you could not be tried before that time, naturally; and on the other hand I might depart, and Dean might hang — an innocent man! — even though I reprieve him to my last moment of authority. No! Mr. Sloan, the thing to do is to let Jasper get away, and yet to be assured that he will be at hand if ever you come to trial."

"And your plan, Colonel?"

"Bail," he retorted. "Bail! An amount of money put up jointly by you and him, enough to warrant his appearance."

"This would allow me liberty too, as I understand it?"

"Naturally! Naturally! Do you not think it a fair proposition?"

"Have you mentioned it to him?" I asked. "I should think he could personally raise in the neighbor-

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hood of five shillings if the loan was made by some one unfamiliar with his affairs."

"I am aware," he responded quickly, "that the money must come mostly from you; and yet I think he can aid you a little, too. Realty will not be acceptable in this case. His surety must be in gold."

"Gold?" said I. "There is little enough of that hereabout. What is the amount you think right, under these strange circumstances — or perhaps you have not come to a decision as to the amount yet?"

"Yes," he said. "I have decided down to the last farthing. It must be in gold, you understand, and in my hands by dawn of Monday. The deathwatch is placed over the condemned at four in the morning, and after they are on duty nothing may save Dean. You understand that!"

"Yes. And the amount?"

"Twenty thousand pieces of eight is my price. No more — and not a farthing less!"

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CHAPTER XVIII

The Spirit of Jasper Dean

"I REPEAT for the twentieth time, I do not know where the money which Johnny Wells is supposed to have stolen is concealed," I said.

"And I repeat, for the twentieth time," the Colonel rejoined, "that I believe you lie in so saying; and the proof of it will be the life of Jasper Dean, and a locked chain for yourself underground if you cannot remember the spot where it's hidden. When you wrote that note to the fair young lady that you supposed honored me with her affection, you knew. You might lie to me now, and naturally enough, too, but you would not have lied to her."

"I did not lie," I explained, "nor did I say I had found the treasure. I simply said that I was on the verge of making the discovery. Perhaps I flattered myself when I wrote, but at all events I have found nothing since that time, nor have I had time to delve further into the mystery."

"If you speak the truth I am sorry, as the result must indeed be distasteful to us all. How, may I ask, did you know the exact amount of the money?"

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"I was told it by Puncher."

He shook his head, with a grim incredulous smile on his thin lips, and continued his pacing of the small apartment. Some hours had passed, yet still we sat — we three — nor had our parley come to anything. The Colonel was leaving on the following Monday for England. Whether he was going of his own free will, or was commanded to return, I did not know. Evidently he had made up his mind that he was not going empty handed. He felt that among Dean, Littleton, Puncher, Miss Dale and me, the whereabouts of the hidden fortune must be discovered and paid over to him for our release. He had suggested that I appeal to Mr. Littleton, but I had proved that this would be ridiculous. No one could know less than the lawyer where this wealth was secreted. Puncher was also out of the question. I admitted having only that day given the latter a copy of the words written by Wells on the cell wall. How Miss Dale could know or be interested in knowing, I could not see; but while I had understood she was wealthy, I could not think of asking her to raise a similar amount — even say she could do so — to free me from my present position. What Jasper would do I did not know, but as the Colonel had been compelled to entice me into his prison I felt he had had a try, and could do nothing with the Irishman.

Suddenly, as we wrangled, the woman raised her hand for silence, and I heard the cry of a watchman in

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a distant street. We listened, and the call was shortly repeated close at hand.

"E — leven o'clock of a clear night, and a — ll's well!"

The last singsong phrase stuck in my mind, and I could think of nothing further from the truth. I pictured the library at Littleton's, and wondered if there was a chance the Governor had promised to interfere in the carrying out of the sentence. Soon they would be worried where I might be. I could see Miss Katz, in my mind's eye, and the kindly housekeeper, Mrs. Bergen, peering into my room; and Puncher snuffing himself prodigiously and hazarding reasons for my absence. I had not eaten since early in the afternoon, and asked Broadfoot if I at least might receive a drink. I think he had had nothing himself, for he sent the woman to fetch some bread, meat, and wine.

I rose to stretch myself as she departed, at which he lifted his pistol from the table, but I laughed and shook my head, and walking to the little opened window, drew in a breath of the cool fresh air. Even here in the prison there was a suggestion of Spring in the night, a distant rustle of new leaves and a perfume of dew-moist sward. The casement so faced that the lights of the City were not seen, but the sky above was tinted with a pale reflection of their illumination. We were upon the first floor of the building, I noticed, although this was well raised above the level of the

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street. In the gaol yard below a sentry moved back and forth in the murksomeness, a dim shaft from the window in which I stood flashing on his gun as he walked.

We did not speak until the food was brought, and then without invitation I dragged my chair to the table, and fell to eating — lest they might think the Colonel's threats had spoiled my appetite. He also ate, although devoting greater attention to the bottle; and when we had done, he had evidently decided on a new lead in his desperate game.

Rising, he indicated that I was to follow him; so together we passed through a hall and down a short flight of steps to the court where the sentry trod, and out across the bricked yard to the prison building which faced on Third Street. It was here that I had been before with Major Broadfoot to see the writing in Wells' dungeon, and where I was now to learn that Jasper Dean was confined.

Entering by the same side entrance I remembered, we mounted the two pair of wooden stairs to the eaves under which the prisoners slept; and here in the attic — in the same space wherein had lain the now dead Wells — we stopped and rapped upon a door. From the gloom at the far end of the garret, aroused by our noise, shuffled the lank form of the maimed warder, Gorspill; and extracting a key from a large ring on his belt, he turned back the bolt for us to enter. The

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fellow hung over the lock of the door, intent evidently, — under the light of the taper we held, — upon his manipulation of the key; but he knew me, although he did not raise his eyes to my face, as well as I knew him and his murderous crutch.

I thought the Colonel was about to enter the room with me, but this was not his intention. Instead he indicated that I should go in alone.

"Here you will find your friend Dean," he said. "Talk the matter over with him while still you both have time. It is nearing midnight. If the money is placed in my hands before the death-watch is set at four of Monday morning — good! Both of you should be as safe as my immediate departure can make you. But — ! Chained darkness for you, and the rope for him, if that hour passes and I receive one farthing less than the sum I name. Remember, money lost may be regained — and life once lost is gone beyond recall. I trust that you come to a sane conclusion ere I call for you to-morrow. Good night."

I stepped within while the door was closed and bolted again, holding the light in my hand. Sitting upon the side of a small pallet, with his eyes riveted upon my face, was the condemned prisoner.

"Well," he said, after a moment's pause, "is it good news — or bad?"

I rested the candle in a stand on the wall before I replied, and then seated myself on a stool before him.

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"I don't know for certain, Jasper, but I think it is bad."

"I thought I heard him say something of money?"

"He did. Neither of us has much time, yet I must tell you all that he has told me. We may then come to some decision when we thoroughly understand each other. Shall I begin?"

He nodded, and I at once launched into the story that the Colonel had told me of the Major's death at my hands, and of his departure for England and desire to secure the hidden treasure before he sailed. Dean listened attentively until I was done. Then he rested his head upon his hand in thought for some time. Finally he seemed to come to a determination, and nodded vigorously to himself as his plan took further shape in his mind. The story I had related was a long one, and the hour was now late. Suddenly the candle in the rude sconce on the wall flickered and went out, leaving us in complete darkness. Jasper laughed softly at this result, and bade me make my mind easy.

"The news you bring is good news, Worrell," he said. "I can see my way clearly now. By Monday morning we will both be free of this worry, and on our way to happiness again. Have you no fear, for I have decided all will be well with us. But we must rest in what is left of this night, for to-morrow is our last day here, and firmness and decision may be

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needed ere we depart. Let me beg of you, lay by all fear or thought of the future. In the morning I will tell you of my plans — but now we must to our rest. Will you have the bed or the floor for your couch? I can assure you I have tried both, and they are equally hard. Also the fleas in the pallet offset the rats which run about the floor. What say you? "

"I will take to the floor and my cloak, then," I answered. "But it will be hard to wait till dawn to learn how we are to escape. Could you not give me but a hint of it now? "

"It were best not. Sleep until I call you. But remember one thing: since I have sat here I have read much of Matt's Johnny's message on the wall yonder. Perhaps I might be able to find such a sum as he demands if it becomes necessary to buy our lives from this rascally Colonel. Good-night, Worrell, and have no fear of what will come."

So taking him at his word, I made my preparations, and eventually fell to dreaming.

It was late when I dropped to sleep, and consequently later than my usual hour when I awoke on the following morning. For a moment or two I lay, wondering at the hard boards beneath me; and then recalling where I was I scrambled to my feet, to find that Dean was risen, and was at the small window overlooking the Town. So lost in thought was he that he seemed not to have noted my rising, and as I

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watched I thought I saw him weeping there in the morning's fickle light.

A bell of a church was tolling its mellow bidding to service, the day being the Sabbath, and its note, which under other circumstances might have rung a joyful peal, stifled my heart with its chilling clamor as though it were a passing bell for some poor convicts such as we. Silent I stood until it ceased, and then I tapped my companion upon the arm, at which he roused himself, and I saw that he had indeed been touched with emotion, although he had a smile for me when I leaned beside him on the sill.

"Have your plans gone awry?" I asked.

"Not so," he rejoined. "It was but an old thought I had which made me for a moment sad."

"This seems indeed a natural place for sorrow," I said.

"I was thinking of something far away from here," he answered. "Worrell, have you ever been in Ireland?"

"No."

"Ah! It's a pretty land — to those who know it well. I've seen a bit of it in my time, and that which would be but a bog or a fell to you, has a beauty that only the word, home, may paint in a chill picture."

"I can understand that," I said.

"Oft is the time," he continued after a pause, "that I have listened to such bells on a Sunday dawn at

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home. It was of that I was thinking when you saw me with a tear in my eye."

"Would you like to be back in Ireland?" I asked.

"Would I not!" he replied. And then, as though he had shown too much emotion he changed the subject. "I think I hear my cheerful guard upon the stair with some breakfast to begin the day with. Let us pray that it is enough for two. This fellow Gorspill thinks that I am hiding the money Wells stole, and he would beat the secret from me with his crutch — if he dared. When we have eaten I will tell you of my plan to end our incarceration."

Scarcely had he spoken when a key ground in the lock, and Crutcher Gorspill entered with some milk, bread, and a part of a Delaware shad cooked in the embers of the grate. He put down the fare on the corner of the pallet, scowled generously on both of us, and hobbled out again, slamming the door and turning the lock with much unnecessary violence. To this Jasper paid no heed whatever, and we soon had made a meal of the coarse food. Then drawing the rude bed beside the window-ledge, we used it for a bench, while he unfolded his project.

"First you must know, Worrell," he began, "that what Colonel Broadfoot told you yesterday was the fruit of his own imagination. Of it I told him nothing, nor has he questioned me at all. Let me tell you

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the truth of the matter from the moment your horse fell from the wound I gave it. I whipped up my team instantly (with no time to reload naturally) and away we dashed over the countryside. The Major was up to me pretty quickly after he had left you, however, and having a pistol he had me stopped just at the side of the field where you found his body. I got out of the chaise at his command (with his weapon at my head I could do no less) and there we held a sort of parley. He wished to know why I had borne the girl away, and I lied to him, and said that it was her wish to come with me. He told me that I lied, and I sprang and struck him in the face. Our quarrel was short but fierce. I taunted him for insulting an unarmed man, until he bade me load my pistol and face him in the field across the road. Frankly I feared to do this lest right might triumph after all, and I should die by his bullet. He was a fine shot and a brave man, the Major. That tribute I can pay him with a clear conscience."

"And you fought?" I asked, for he had paused.

"Yes. And most fairly, too. I am a good swordsman, but nothing with a pistol; therefore I had little hope of coming forth alive. How strange is fate! He fired a second before my pistol was discharged, and the ball went wild. I simply thrust out my arm and pressed the trigger. He fell without a sound. I ran to his side, and turned him on his back to learn where

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he was wounded. You cannot conceive my surprise — my horror! — when I found that he was dead. I don't remember picking up his pistol, but I must have done so, for it was found in the chaise, and leaping in the equipage I dashed away once more. Shortly I was overtaken, as you learned. It was a desperate act, as now I know — and yet it is by desperate acts that some succeed. I am not one of the fortunate, evidently."

"Why did you not tell this at the trial? It might have got you just a term of imprisonment."

He shook his head and smiled. "First, I doubt if any would have thought I told the truth. Second, I would rather die than live within four walls. Liberty! Ah, Worrell, you don't know what that one word means to me! You hear it often in the mouths of men, but who would know its value as would I? For years my life was spent inside a Home! A very gaol, if you must know the truth. Then here at Littleton's, where wealth and joy and love were dangled just outside my reach, as hangs the sunshine and the Summer's rain just past that mesh of bars upon the window here. Freedom! That is my goal. If death would set me free, I'd welcome it. You were born free. You would not understand. But if you saw that which you longed for most whisk like a phantom just beyond your reach, you'd war with fate — you'd struggle for the prize! — and if it bore you here be-

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neath the shadow of a rope — you still would play the man — you'd not repine? "

" I'd do the best I knew to save myself! "

" Which," he said, after a silence of some minutes, " brings us back to Colonel Broadfoot once again."

" If I understand you correctly, then," I said, " you think he told me this story of my complicity in his brother's death, to frighten the whereabouts of the hidden moneys from me, providing I knew the place? "

" Yes. And the strange part is, that while you still lack that information (although you have all the evidence in your hands) I have learned where the gold is hidden, by sitting here before this writing on the wall which Johnny left."

" You have learned the secret? "

" Yes. Nor do I believe that any other has yet read the riddle correctly. Hark you, my laddie, and I will point it out to you. Then we can buy our lives free again, and go our ways while the Colonel goes his."

" But — is there no other method except to purchase our freedom with this money? "

" None that I know of. It is money that a scoundrel like the Colonel must have. But we can put our hands upon it in an instant — thanks to Johnny Wells, and me."

" What if the person who gave the gold would not let it be used for this purpose? "

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"The money was donated by two people. One I know will give his half. As to the other, that must be your business."

"My business?"

"Yes. It stands thus: you must win away from this cell to-night, and go directly to Mistress Dale. Ask her if her share of this gold may be used for this purpose. For reasons none know better than do I, she will agree. As for Littleton, he will spend his ten thousand pieces of eight to save the disgrace of my hanging."

"Littleton! Amos Littleton?"

"Surely. Does it surprise you that he gave toward his oppressed country? Many men thought loyal to the King have done as much, or more."

"But Littleton! Why, he was ever at odds with the Sons of Liberty."

"Oh, his criticism was merely a sop to his conscience. If we turned out badly he would say, 'Just as I expected'; and if all was well he had had a hand in the glory. Amos Littleton is what the Scotch call a 'canny man.' Whoever wins he usually comes out upon the right side."

"Jasper, you never did this man even justice. It is possible Littleton has given to the cause you espouse, but he had a better thought when he did so than you will give him credit for. If you tell me this is his money — !"

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"It was I who got it from him."

"— then I will believe it so, and will believe that out of the goodness of his heart he will spend this rather than we two should perish. As for Mistress Dale — that is another matter. You say you know that she will save you with her gold?"

"It is not I that she will save," he replied, "but you."

"Me! Why should she waste a fortune upon one whom she has never seen?"

He laughed mirthlessly. "I do not know, but she told me as much before I bore her away. Do not wonder too much, but look upon this message writ upon the wall here."

I turned my eyes to where the writing now showed clear in the light of the window. At his bidding I took a pencil of graphite from my pocket and wrote upon a piece of paper the sentence again, just as it was printed on the wall.

A Step
From Low Stone Abutment
Obliquely Off
The Third Pier
Guarding Hart's Alley Wall. Dislodge Narrow Cobblestone
Seekk for It
J. W.

Taking the pencil from my hand when I had finished, he leaned beside me on the narrow sill.

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"Note," said he, "that there is but one misspelled word. Sure, the man who could spell 'obliquely' would not err on the word 'seek.' It is there only that I cannot see clearly what he meant. Watch me as I take the first letter of the first word, the second letter of the second word, and so on — "

"But it will come to nothing," I interrupted. "I have already tried that scheme without success."

"You must not go completely through the message with this system," he explained. "You must begin each line at the beginning again. It was thus that he divided his message into words. See — "

And he underlined each letter in this manner:

A Step
From Low Stone Abutment
Obliquely Off
The Third Pier
Guarding Hart's Alley Wall. Dislodge Narrow Cobblestone

"Now arrange them in the proper order," he said. I did so, with this result:

At
Foot
Of
The
Gallows

"Splendid!" I cried. "There is no doubt of his meaning. But, what of this other line? It would spell 'sot' if arranged in the same manner."

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"That I admit I do not see through," said Dean, "but I feel it could have little or nothing to do with the place of concealment."

I studied for a moment, and then smiled in recognition of the dead man's meaning.

"I understand that line now, because I know something which you do not. Miss Katz has a poem with her name woven through it as this message is arranged here. Wells knew of this, and it was from her that he received his inspiration for this rebus. Really he should have left a space, so that the line would read:

See K. K. for It

meaning to see Katherine Katz. The two letters below are, of course, his initials."

"I think you are right," Jasper said. "It was a clever arrangement, and to us it spells freedom. As soon as we can get word to the Colonel you must hurry away — secure the gold, after obtaining permission to use it, and return with it here. I will remain until you arrive — and then for a boat on the river, and ho! for the old sod again!"

"Will you return to Ireland?"

"Where else? Ah, poor Johnny Wells! Your ghost is sitting cross-legged on the gallows on the hill — watching over the gold you tried to save. It must be a poorer, weaker man than you, Johnny, who will dig it up to buy away a rope. But when we meet upon the other side of Death, be not too hard upon me, Johnny boy!"

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CHAPTER XIX

Liberty

IT had been arranged between us that when the Colonel arrived Jasper would do the talking, and shortly after ten in the morning his expected visit was made.

"I hope," said he, after the usual polite preliminaries, "that you two young gentlemen have decided that the money is best in my hands?"

"We have talked it over at great length," Dean responded, "and we rather think we might accommodate you if you will allow us to dictate some of the terms."

"I see no reason why we should not come to a proper understanding," the other replied, evidently much pleased that his scheme for personal enrichment had turned out well. "If you do this thing for me, remember, I will stand a good friend to you both. What do you say now, Dean, if I get a berth for you on the same ship which takes me to England tomorrow? It would be an opportunity, I take it."

"No," said Dean, boldly; "I doubt if the same ship would hold us both, Colonel. But as the offer

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seems made in kindness, at least I make you thanks for it."

"As you will," said the soldier. "But whatever arrangements you desire will have my hearty furtherance — providing the gold is in my hands to-morrow before four in the morning. That, you understand, is my one stipulation."

"It can be done in but one way," said Jasper. "To-night at about nine o'clock you must have a good horse waiting on Third Street, say in the shadow of the tree you can see from the window here. Sloan will leave us at that hour, and go directly to Littleton's home — "

"Why should he go directly there? "

"Because something there has much to do with the location of the money. Believe me, it must be as I say — or not at all. Now, after stopping at the house for but a few minutes he will ride elsewhere. I do not care to say where, but doubtless you will have some one follow him, and he will know and report to you! "

"Why do you think that I will have him followed? "

"Well, if I were in your place I would. And your nature is even more suspicious than mine. No, I count on his being followed, but that will do you little or no good. He will not have the money with him at that time, and you will only fail if you have him stopped. From this second place Sloan will take

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a guard to where the gold is concealed. He will be instructed by me, and warned by his own good judgment, to shoot down any one who attempts to interfere with his conveying the money here personally. It is there that your spy will run some risk, I take it. You will be at the little door where Sloan made his entrance last night. He will bring the gold to you, and return to this cell until you are satisfied that it is the amount demanded. Then I am to receive one hour's start, he meanwhile remaining with you. Shortly before your ship sails, go aboard, and leave word to set him at liberty during the evening. If you wish you can set a hue and cry after me, for I will be safe away in one hour."

"That seems fair enough," said the Colonel, for Jasper had paused. "That seems quite all right. The money is placed in my hands while you are both in the prison here with me, if I understand you correctly?"

"That is right. Have you anything to add?"

"No-o," he said slowly. "N-o. But (I am only joking, now, of course), let us suppose for a moment that, having both you two and the money here, I should let you go hang, and really chain this fellow underground. How could you protect yourself then?"

"Well," said Jasper, "knowing that I was dealing with you, I had naturally expected and arranged for just that — but I did not think it necessary to explain

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it. As you ask, however, I can do no less. You are not, I believe, a member of the society of the Sons of Liberty? No. Well, they take in such queer people sometimes that I was not certain. Now, I am. And the reason that Worrell goes first to Littleton's is to get Puncher to call out the members of the Association. In case I am hanged, they will be instructed to catch you and hang you up at my side — which they will be glad to do as they will then secure their gold which you are stealing. Mr. Puncher, after doing this, is to come directly here beneath this window, and chat with Sloan until his release. We of the Society have a secret sign of distress. If Sloan is in any danger he will make this sign. It will receive prompt recognition, I am certain."

"Of what does the sign consist?"

"I regret I am under oath not to reveal it."

"Well, well!" said the Colonel after some thought, "we must have some trust in each other to make this undertaking a success. I think everything will work out splendidly. And if it doesn't — you, Dean, will be the greatest sufferer. I have another suggestion which might interest you, too. The lady who has done me the honor of locating under my roof for some time, will not — will not be able to accompany me home. Other ties which I long ago contracted there would make her presence unwelcome and embarrassing. You, Dean, have shown a marked attraction toward her. So much so, in fact, that we might

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have had some unpleasantness upon the subject ere now, had not the memory of my — my family in Belfast been uppermost in my mind. Be this as it may, I thought it might interest you to know that I am through with her now, and that she is setting sail on a ship bound for Virginia, which leaves about the same time as mine. I have not found an opportunity to enlighten her as to this — yet, and it is quite possible I may not do so at all. She will naturally think when boarding this vessel that it is the one slated to make Liverpool; and on her awakening to the truth, if she could find you there to comfort her, I am certain it would be most gratifying all around."

There was a tense silence. Then Dean said:

"If that is all regarding the money matter, I think you would best leave us until to-night, when Worrell must away."

"Certainly! Certainly! I meant no offense, I assure you. If she was attractive enough to philander with when I was 'round, I thought she might hold even greater interest when she could devote her entire attention to you. Good-morning, gentlemen; and for your own sweet sakes attempt no trickery, lest your lives pay the price."

We sat long in silence after he had gone. There seemed really but little to say. As far as I could see, the plan Jasper had outlined was good — good enough, at all events, to buy our way to liberty. He sat for a

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long time brooding, his chin in his hand and his eyes half closed. So long he sat, in fact, that I thought he had fallen to slumber — but probably he was only lost in the thoughts of the past. I wondered if these musings were of a happy nature; or if, perhaps, they held some sorrow for the days gone by? The calm upon his face was but a mask. I do not know and do not dare to guess what passions thrilled beneath his meditative silence.

Later he shook from him this retrospection, if such it was, and we held conversation in a desultory way. Nothing of importance was mentioned that I recall. Some meat and bread were brought to us by Gorspill later, and we ate. Ale also was served, and a soup promised for our final meal of the day.

"Your last!" Our lame server had spat at Dean in mentioning the supper. How little he thought that Jasper would out-live him!

Along toward dusk I begged my companion to teach me the secret sign of the Sons of Liberty. He seemed at a loss for a moment as to what I meant, and then smiled a crooked smile at me.

"I had forgotten that," he said. "So I fooled you as well as him, eh! No, Worrell, there was nothing in that story, except to let him know I was not the fool he might take me for. When you leave here go directly to Littleton's, and give to Puncher a note which I shall presently write. Place it yourself in his

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hands. This is most important. Do not leave there until you personally see him, yet do not tarry to explain anything, for my letter will do that better than could you. As soon as this is done, ride at once to Miss Dale's, and place the matter of using the money for my release before her. If you are compelled to wait long for Puncher you may be forced to arouse her from bed, but this you must do. If she agrees, you and she, with two male servants, must go promptly to the hill where the gallows stands, and dig at the foot for the gold. Wait just a moment while I think it out. You are to have it here not later than four owing to the setting of the death-watch at that hour. Let us say half after three, then. I think it would be better not to leave her house for the money until one o'clock of the night. You see, you will likely be followed, and an effort might be made to rob you before you arrive here with it. The less time it is in your care, then, the better it will be. Go from her house at one o'clock promptly — unless you must wait still later to see Puncher, which is most unlikely. The gold will be found in an oak chest bound with iron, and locked. It was in this chest that Wells stole it from our keeping, and as he had no key, and was in great haste, I think he buried it as it was. Do not attempt to open it. Let the two servants aid you to carry it, for it is heavy. Take it directly to Littleton's. You should reach there by two at the latest.

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Puncher has the key which will unbolt the chest. Let him return to the prison with you. Miss Dale may go home then, but her men can carry the money here if she is willing. If you do exactly as I say, all will be well. If you alter my plans in any way — my life will not be worth a farthing. Go over it all carefully in your mind now, and ask me if there is any part you do not understand."

"I am first to take the note to Mr. Puncher, and see that he personally receives it. I am then to go to Miss Dale, and ask for the use of the money. She will naturally agree, and she and I are to go to the gallows to dig for it. Why is she to go with me?"

"For a reason you may understand better then than now. Let it suffice that I would have it so. What next?"

"When we find the chest — and you certainly expect that the search will be a short one — we are not to open it, but bear it straight to Mr. Littleton's; where Miss Dale is to return home, and Puncher and I will bring it here, with the aids of the blacks. Why will Puncher have the key of the chest?"

"I am sending it to him in the note. I would give it to you, but in case you were stopped and overpowered it is better the chest be locked. It is too heavy to run away with, and too well made to break open in haste."

"I understand. Have I everything else right?"

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"Yes. Now, if you will let me have your pencil, I will write my line to our old friend Puncher."

As I was reaching in my pocket, there came a knocking at the door, and a murmur of voices. Remaining motionless, we listened and watched intently. Shortly the lock was turned, and there stepped within the woman who had met me the night previous at the little gate in the lane.

The door was immediately bolted behind her, but she paid no heed to this — walking to where my companion stood by the little window; nor do I think she even recalled that I was there.

"Jasper," she said, in a voice which held more tenderness than I thought could spring from those lustful lips, "Jasper, Carlos has told me all! There seems no hope of saving you, he says. He does not know that I am with you now — and this Crutcher I mistrust, and with good reason. Jasper! I cannot bid you farewell! My life and yours are one! See — ! " and she drew from her skirt a pistol, "I took this from him as we talked — "

"No, no! " he cried. "You would not — "

"Quick! It is for you to use! "

"No, my dear," he answered, with the weapon in his hand. "If I'm to go I'll go with conscience clear. I'd rather hang, a guiltless man, than rob myself of life."

"You will not understand! " she wailed, her arms

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about him as he stood. "'Tis loaded, primed, and ready to be fired. Fight! Your life is worth a score of such as he! Kill! I've risked my all to bring it to your hand. Make it of use! 'Tis all that I can do."

He put her back from him with gentleness, and held her by her shoulders. A time — a long, long time, it seemed — he gazed into her face. And then he smiled his carefree winning smile, and in her hands she sunk her tear-stained face. He reached the weapon back to her, and quietly she placed it in the folds of her dark dress again. And then he led her to the dungeon door. I turned away, and leaning on the window ledge, looked at the City and the waving trees. I did not know what passed, nor when she went. But, in a while, he was beside me, and asked for my graphite once again.

He then took my place at the window, with a large square of paper which he seemed to cover very completely with writing. In fact the length of what he wrote must have been excessive, for the sun was almost set when he had made an end. The gaoler entered about this time with the soup, and Jasper requested some wax and a candle to seal the letter — "the last request I shall ever make of you, Crutcher"; — and the latter secured both for him with better grace than I expected. Folding the key in the paper, Dean used his watch seal to press the

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wax, and gave it into my possession. Again were we alone, and the time for parting close to hand.

"Jasper," said I, after some thought as to how best broach a subject in my mind, "We may never meet again, or at least be separated for years, with the exception of a few minutes when the Colonel goes over the gold that I shall bring. There are two questions I would be pleased if you could answer — nor think that I would take offense if they do not flatter me, who ask. The first is: when I rode after you with the Major, and you fired your pistol from the window of the chaise, did you aim to kill me?"

He ran his fingers through his hair, and paced the room before replying; but eventually stopped before me — feet spread wide apart, and eyes directly upon mine.

"Yes!" he said. "It is fortunate for you — and for others, including myself — that I am so poor a marksman. I shot to kill! Had you suffered the luck of the Major, you would be lying beneath the sod now, as is he. Why did I do so? Well, that is a tale I cannot tell tonight; but if you ask Miss Dale, I think she can tell you. In fact, Worrell, I can suggest that you ask Miss Dale, and further tell her that I begged you would learn the reason from her lips."

"I will ask her — if there be time. Now for the

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second question. Why did you try to carry her away? "

"That she can also tell you. It was because of something about which we were speaking alone in the hallway of her home just before her guests arrived. She can scarcely tell you the reply to one query without giving you the clue to the other. I could tell you myself, of course, but I feel certain it will impress you more, coming from her."

"Jasper," said I, "we had a strange meeting — and this parting seems to me stranger still. Where will we meet next, think you? "

"I do not dare to dwell on that," he answered. "But when I am away do not allow those who will surely speak against my memory to deny there was something of worth, no matter how little, in my character."

"In time you may return here to defend yourself."

"To what end? " he said, and shook his head. "The most of me is weak. The most of me is worthless. What Broadfoot said about this misled girl is right enough. It was an insult to throw upon me the dregs of a discarded passion. It was an insult, but it was deserved. Hark! That is his step upon the stair. The time has come indeed for parting. Give me your hand! Worrell, you will not fail me in anything you have promised? More is in it now, to me,

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than even life itself. Like Puncher, I can sometimes read the stars. Last night as you slept, I read of you as they swam past the prison window. At an early day you will come into fortune — one so vast it takes my breath away to think upon it. Use it well! If ever there should come a time, be it fifty years from now, when you would look upon these riches without wonder — think of me! — and let your eyes be dazzled as were mine. Good-evening, Colonel. Is a good horse waiting for my friend here? "

" It is by the tree as you suggested."

" Fine! Then you must get you gone."

" Who goes from here? " said a voice at the door. It was Crutcher Gorspill, with his dark face thrust forward in menacing inquiry.

" I," I replied. " Do you object to my departure? "

" Not so long as you have not the money hid by John Wells."

" What's that to you? " snapped the Colonel.

" I am a patriot, and I will not see my Country robbed — " began the warder, but his superior cut him short with a curt gesture.

" You are a smuggling, lying thief! " he said. " This is my business, Crutcher. Pegg's Run and the smuggler's cove is yours. Do not interfere! "

" I'll follow this man," said the other, furiously. " And if he meets that girl, and hunts with her the gold — I'll kill the two of them! "

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"What girl?" I asked.

"Her that you know," he answered darkly. "And she knows where the money's hid. I would have had the knowledge out of her this long time had you not meddled."

"Meddled! You would have killed her as you killed your own spy!"

"Who killed a man?" he roared.

"Ah!" cried Jasper. "So gentle Crutcher is not in the best of moral health, it seems. He killed a man, eh? To get the money for himself, he killed a man! I hope to get away to-night, with the aid of this same coin, Gorspill. Perhaps you would like to take my place upon the hill to-morrow? Surely the hanging of a one-legged man would draw a curious throng. Why, look you, Worrell! Is that not a rope lying but now about his neck? See! No, I am sorry, Crutcher, it is but a shadow. Never bother, however. Your time will come. And I will wander back to watch you as you kick and struggle!"

With an oath the lame man took one step within the room, and — his hand upon the jamb of the door to steady himself — whipped his murderous crutch to a lance-like poise, its ferrule bearing upon Dean. So quick he was that neither the Colonel nor I could interfere. Jasper stood motionless, almost as though he welcomed the pending blow. I saw the muscles flex in the gaunt frame, and the eyes narrow. Then, as the

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giant truncheon swung back — there came a spit of flame in the dark hall without — a sharp report, and the crash of a falling body.

Down in a swirl of sulphurous smoke sank the would-be slayer — dead! It was I who caught the swaying woman in my arms and bore her over the body into the room. Her face was white and her eyes rolled back, but she did not swoon; and in a moment was able to stand without support. She did not look at Dean or at me, but only into the face of the prison Governor.

"You forgot your pistol, Colonel," she said, and tried to smile.

"True," he answered. "True!" And took it from her with an air almost of embarrassment. It was Dean who did the proper thing, being, it seemed, less shaken than the rest of us although in such great danger.

"Madam," he said, bowing before her, and raising a cold limp hand to his lips. "You have saved my life for me. It was a worthless life, as none could know much better than yourself; yet, nevertheless, my thanks go out to you in greater sincerity perhaps because I am sincere in little that I do. Indeed, 'twas bravely done — an act sprung from the brain and hand — and heart; and would that I might live the better for your deed — and so I will."

He led her to the window, where she sank upon

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the pallet's edge, with face averted. Jasper then turned to us.

"A moment ago my life hung on a thread. Still is it in jeopardy. Sloan must be off at once if we are to succeed. Is all in readiness?"

The Colonel nodded.

"Remember, Worrell," said Dean, and took me by the hand. "Fail me not! God bless you. Haste away!"

Broadfoot went to the door with me. Stooping, he dragged the body of his erstwhile henchman into the entry without. Looking back, he seemed to hesitate to leave Dean and the girl alone in the cell. And then, with a murmured word beneath his breath he locked the door behind him and bade me follow down the stairs. Out in the cool night we went, across the walled-in yard, and by another door to where the horse was tied and champing to be off. The Colonel stood glowering at me as I sprang to the saddle, but he said no word — and in a moment I was away in the night.

As I turned into High Street I drew rein to look at the little window in the peak of the roof. A dim light shone through the bars, and I thought I saw the prisoner I had left wave his hand in recognition and encouragement. I flourished my hat in response, and spurred upon my way.

From the duck-pond to the west came the croaking

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of the frogs, and the night birds trilled and twittered in the hedge. The moon was lifting its golden disc behind the tower of old Christ Church, and the air was moist and sweet with a hint of rain. How fair lay the world before me!

Ah, priceless liberty!

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CHAPTER XX

The Hidden Treasure

IT was close to ten o'clock on that fateful Sunday night when I drew rein before my Uncle Littleton's door, for my start from the prison had been delayed by the events there, and Broadfoot had been late in securing the horse. I knocked, and bade the servant who replied to the summons hold my mount at the block while I went within for a moment. In the library sat Miss Katz, Mr. Littleton and Mr. Puncher, all of whom rose in excitement at my entrance, and with their warm greetings and expressions of thankfulness at my safe return, readily revealed the worry and strain my unexplained absence had caused.

I assured them all in a word that it was impossible to go into any details of where I had been, and promised an early and full explanation as soon as my time would allow. Begging the indulgence of the other two, I handed Jasper's letter to the astrologer, and requested him to read it at once that I might be again upon my way. He seated himself at a sidetable with a convenient candle upon it, and read carefully what

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the prisoner had written. Meanwhile we three sat silent, watching his broad face for some hint as to the contents; but in this we were without success, for he never altered for an instant the calm expression of his countenance.

So carefully did he read, however, and so important did he find the message that the letter contained, that he reread not once but a second time. And then he rose, and addressed us.

"Friends," said he, "I have here received a letter of instruction from one you all are praying for this night, — Jasper Dean. He has asked me to do some certain things, and I will not fail him if it lies in my power to carry out his requests. Further I can say nothing, and Worrell is also to remain silent until the proper time arrives to speak. My boy," addressing me, "what he has asked of me shall be done. Do you likewise carry out your part of his request, and all will be as he wishes it. You are leaving us again for the night, I suppose? Be careful to abide by the letter of his instruction. I also leave hard upon your departure. Good luck to you — for his sake and for all."

I wrung his hand, and bidding good-night to the others paused but for the making of myself more presentable, and was out again and away. It was just half after the hour by the night-watch cry when I turned into the drive leading to the Dale residence.

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The iron gates before the entrance were closed, but I dismounted and drew one open; and making my way slowly in the tree-shadowed road, I trotted to the door of the great house.

A woman servant replied to my knocking, demanding to learn of my mission ere she unbarred the door. Miss Dale, it appeared, had retired, and could see no one until morning. I implored her to carry a message, mentioning the name of Littleton, and after a long wrangle through the keyhole she eventually consented. I tied my horse to the rack by the steps, and waited with as much patience as I could muster. Finally she returned, accompanied by an elderly manservant with a blunderbuss, and I was admitted at the mouth of this ordnance. My position was not as hazardous as may be thought, however, as I noted that the pan of the weapon was not primed; and my appearance being somewhat in my favor possibly, I was permitted to rest peacefully in the hall until the arrival of an elderly lady who would carry a direct message to her relative and mistress.

"Tell Miss Dale," said I, "that I must see her for a short while as soon as she can make ready to receive me. Say that I come from a prisoner whose welfare rests largely upon this interview. Say also that Mr. Littleton, Miss Katz and Mr. Puncher are praying for the success of my mission to her, and that

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the latter is himself away upon some similar errand — regarding which I will explain all that I know in our interview."

To my surprise the elderly lady seemed quite unimpressed. She said she would deliver the message — or what part of it she could remember — to Miss Dale, however, and mounted the wide stairs. I paced about until she returned (haunted by the blunderbussed lackey) and Miss Dale would like to know if I could not say what was necessary through her door, and also, who was I thus bringing such a tale at midnight?

Disregarding the inaccuracy of the hour mentioned, I firmly said that I must see her face to face; and further that my name was Worrell Sloan, of Riverview.

Again the lady departed, and was more promptly back with the reply that my hostess would be with me now as speedily as was possible. Evidently some preparation was necessary to our meeting, for the maid who had opened to me was summoned, and disappeared up the steps with an armful of apparel and a covert look at me — obviously one of approval. Also the aged manservant departed, to return with a decanter and a glass; and in an attempt to obliterate the memory of the blunderbuss possibly, spoke respectfully, with a cough of personal deprecation behind his hand, of the weather, and the coming crops — to which I an-

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swered absent-mindedly, while hearkening to the hurry of feet and the bustle on the floor overhead.

Later I was left alone, and silence reigned above. I wondered if Mistress Dale was coming now, and if she would readily agree to the use of this fortune to aid Dean's escape. Upon the table at my side there flamed some candles in a massive stand, aided in making the great hall more brilliant by a mirror directly behind them. I had been so intent thus far upon the reason of my visit that there had come no thought to my personal appearance. But now, with my remembrance of the night upon the goal floor, and of my hurried ablution at Littleton's since, I stood to inspect myself in this mirror, and set my dress and hair in such order as I might.

Untying the latter, I smoothed it back and rebound it with a ribbon; and was adjusting my once white neckcloth to a better angle, — when right at my shoulder I saw in the mirror, a ghost!

It was a spirit with eyes of tender brown, this phantom! With hair of perfumed gold, and lips of crimson stain. A ghost with blushing cheeks and throat of wondrous white, whose slender fingers slipped into my own. When I turned she nestled in my arms as a tired fledgling flutters to its eyrie; and with her face against my coat she rested, while I bent down to touch with my lips her tumbled gleaming curls.

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So long we stood without a word that I had quite for the time forgotten the reason of my pilgrimage; but it was the dropping of the tray from the grasp of the astonished servingman — who had come to remove the wine — which really parted us.

"Clarantine," said I. "Why did not you tell me who you were?"

She shook her head. "I promised Mr. Puncher I would not. But that is a long story, and you have come for something about poor Jasper. Can I do anything to save him from this fate? Can anything be done to snatch him from the gallows?"

"I do not know, but I believe there is a chance to set him free. Is there some room where I may speak to you without fear of being overheard? What I have to say is regarding your portion of the hidden moneys, and where it is concealed."

"Yes," she said. "But a moment, Worrell, I have forgotten something. Cousin Eliza! Will you please come down?" and she went to the foot of the steps to meet the elderly relative with whom I had formerly held communication; and whose prompt, not to say instant appearance upon the summons suggested that she had overlooked nothing since her charge had descended to meet me.

I made my best bow to Cousin Eliza, and she dropped me a firm and angular courtesy. Lights were then brought by the still aghast servant, and Claran-

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tine and I made free of a small room off the hall, while her cousin sat, just out of earshot, where she might keep a jealous eye upon us, or doze at intervals, — and awake with a sudden start and glare, as though she dared us both to prove that she had been sleeping.

"Will you give the total of this ten thousand pieces-of-eight to save Dean?" I asked, though knowing before the question what the reply would be.

"Of course! Do you think that it will help him if I do?"

"It is not yet eleven," I said, consulting a clock on the mantel. "When the hour of one arrives we must go for the money, accompanied by your two negro slaves, if that is feasible. In the meantime there are several things which I must tell you, and a question or two which Dean told me to ask. Let me first of all tell you of the plan he has built for his escape."

She nodded, and I told her of the letter I had written, thinking she was the consort of the Colonel at the time. Then of the reply, and the trap set to catch me, and the hidden money the prison governor soon would bear away. She knew, of course, of Jasper's trial and impending fate, so I skipped to the meeting of the night before, where I had so ardently hoped to see her, and had been so completely tricked. I then went on to the story by which Broadfoot had

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attempted to frighten me into telling of the hiding-place, and of my later conversation with Jasper, where I learned what Johnny Wells had written. Then came Dean's confession of how the Major really met his death, and also his firing on me with fatal intent. There I paused, and asked if she could tell me why he had done so, relating how he had suggested my making the inquiry of her.

"Poor Jasper," she said. "I think I understand, and yet it is not easy to explain to any, much less you. Worrell, when first you were expected to come to Mr. Littleton's, that good and sometimes wise man came to me with the proposal that I consider an offer of marriage very seriously from you, if one was forthcoming. I knew, naturally, that he would make the same overture to you when you arrived, and I thought it a most tactless way of approaching a delicate subject, although I did not say as much to him. You see, he had said the same thing in regard to Jasper — and even before I saw him I formed a dislike which took me many days to overcome. With Dean, however, it was different. He liked me from the first, I think, although noting my distaste for his society, but he did everything in his power to conceal it. As time progressed I learned to really admire Jasper, but never could I care for him in the way my good old Mr. Littleton would have liked."

"But Littleton altered in his regard for Jasper."

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"Yes. And when he began to warn me against him I think I felt the first actual interest Dean had ever inspired in me. Seeing this change, Jasper told me of his love, and begged for my hand in marriage. I refused — as kindly as I might. He accepted his defeat gracefully, and for a while I saw him but little. During that period I heard some stories about his undesirable associations which pained me. Feeling this might be laid at my door, I wrote him several times to call upon me, in the hope of winning back to him his self-respect. He always came to see me when I sent for him, but he was changed. There seemed a barrier where before had been, upon my side at least, a sincere friendship. Major Broadfoot also called upon me, as did others, and paid me the compliment of a proposal. This I also was compelled to refuse, although I had not the hesitation or fear of hurting him that I felt for Jasper Dean."

"This was long before I came to Philadelphia?"

"Many weeks before. When Mr. Littleton shortly expected your arrival he, as I have said, filled my ears on all occasions with your wealth, your charm, your fine appearance and your winning personality, until I dreaded the very name of Worrell Sloan. But one day Puncher called upon me — dear old Joshua Puncher! — and whispered in my ear that all was not well with you."

"With me! Why, he had never seen me then!"

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"No more had Mr. Littleton, so praise or blame from either was equally valueless. But at that time I did not know this. Mr. Puncher told me that you were a very dashing rascal, a hero of a thousand escapades, who had pulled the wool over the lawyer's eyes, and delighted in the act. He told me you were the one man I must never consider for an instant, and gave me a warning which was close to a command, to keep from your path at my peril. Naturally I was eager to see what kind of man could befool Mr. Littleton. Consequently I went to the lawyer with the suggestion that he bring you to see me. It would appear that he now knew of your real character, and thought you were not a fit person for my *salon*. It was in vain I pleaded. He called in Mr. Puncher to support his views, and the latter said he would rather see me — I forget just the expression used — than in your society for a minute. Need I say that by the time you arrived I had little thought for any other man? At once the story was brought to me of your securing the bag of snuff from John Wells. On that very night I had written to Jasper Dean in reply to his request for an interview, that I would see him at the Pewter Platter Inn. He had sent me an ardent letter expressing his love for me but shortly before, and at first I hesitated to promise the meeting. Also, the reason he might not come to my home to see me did not ring altogether true. However, the remem-

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brance of his former gentleness bade me send a kindly reply."

"He dropped that letter in my room the first night I spent at Littleton's. You signed it 'Clan,' and I sat and pictured you a dark and oriental beauty."

"I am sorry that you were disappointed in my appearance. Now! Remember Cousin Eliza is watching! Listen. I wrote to him I say; but Mr. Puncher later came to tell me of your arrival, and I confiding in him regarding this coming meeting, he offered his protection and accompanied me. Jasper pretended the meeting was to reveal some information regarding the lost money, but I think his real reason was a desperate hope he could win me in some manner ere I met you. Again Puncher warned me to avoid Worrell Sloan."

"Yes; and he likewise warned me against Clarantine!"

"Of course. The wise old fellow knew there is nothing like opposition to bring two hearts together. Oddly, we met upon the Gallows Hill. You saved my life, and more. But it was not until you told me who you were that a deeper attraction grew. I feared, however, to let you know who I might be, knowing that you had been importuned to look on me with favor, and remembering how this suggestion had turned me against Dean. I sent you back for your cloak, and a prayer. Ah, how it pained to leave you as I

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did! And yet I feared that you might think the less of me for being who I was. For but one day I kept this adventure to myself; and then I called upon Puncher, and confessed our meeting. He scolded me roundly, and threatened to tell Mr. Littleton, but he did not. If I had told him that I even let you — let you — kiss me! He would have died, I know. Then came a day when you went further than did I, for some reason, and told him you had held me in your arms. I think that thoroughly frightened the old fellow, and he came to me with the truth of how he had but lied about you to pique my interest in an eligible man. I forgave him because his ruse had done such wonderfully effective work. Mr. Littleton had asked me to hold a reception here, and I agreed, if you were to come. For doing what he had done, however, the lawyer gave me his promise that you would not be told who I was until we met here. I met you at the forge the following afternoon for the last time. Poor Major Broadfoot had told me of the Bible young Wells had left in the gaol, and I had secured it from him for the smith. For this, at my request, old Matthew left us alone at the smithy that afternoon you may remember. It was the only way I felt that I might learn if true you loved me although you thought me base."

"I loved you, Clarantine, because I could do nothing else."

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"Believe me, these two old fellows enjoyed learning from your lips that you had fallen in love with me, under the impression that I was a girl — no better than she should be — who was much with the governor of the gaol. But the first time you spoke to Mr. Littleton on the matter he thought it was really she who had captured you, and had you not finally mentioned my name, he would have probably had you dragged back to Riverview in haste. They had their hearty laugh behind your back."

"I suppose they did," I answered ruefully. "Well, I left very little doubt of my feelings, if I remember rightly. And Puncher told me he thought he could fix things up with Littleton! I'll never trust that rascal again."

She laughed, and then suddenly sobered at the following reflection.

"We all expected great things of this meeting between you and me. At first only we three knew of it; but Littleton, I think, told Dean — and likely told him of the hope he entertained that we would make a match of it. Dean was to come to the rout, but instead he came before any of the guests had arrived, and begged for a word with me alone. We talked there in the hall by the entrance. He was mad, I think, with jealousy of you. He asked if his last opportunity had passed with me, and I told him frankly that it had. He wanted to know if I thought I could learn

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to love you, and I told him — yes. I had turned to end the interview, I remember, when he suddenly threw a coat of some kind over my head, smothered my cries, and lifted me in his arms. I fainted with fright — and when I regained consciousness I was securely bound, and in the boot of a chaise, whirling and banging over a rough road at a frightful pace. At times we seemed to stop, and again to go rushing on. Finally I was lifted up, and the covers taken from me. I suppose I was hysterical, but I recognized my friends were with me; and soon I recovered under the care of Cousin Eliza and Miss Katz. I think that tells you all you wish to know, does it not? "

" It clears up many questions I have pondered over in these last few days, but it has not told me one thing which is of greater importance than all the rest together. Jasper told me as we parted that he had a vision I was to receive a glorious fortune. He begged me ever to wonder at its riches, and if once I failed in my consideration, to think of him — how poor, how lone was he. It is clear to me now that you are the heritage of which he spoke. Tell me, are these riches to be mine? "

She shook her head. " Wait until we know each other well — a year, say. Then ask me, if you care to, this same question. Perhaps I'll know by then. Perhaps you also will be sure."

" I sure! I am sure now — and was the very day

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I saw you in your sedan chair before the house. Promise me, Clarantine? And later, if you change your mind, I'll let you go again."

"A year," she said. "A little fifty weeks. Come! That's not long to wait, if love's worth waiting for at all."

"A year? I scarce can wait a day! You let me kiss you when first we met to-night!"

"That is not fair to say. You were so strong I could not well resist you. If so you talk of me I think your answer may be 'no.'"

"A year!" I said again. "An hour seems a year to wait for you!"

"A little year? Why, that's soon done. It seems like yesterday the roses bloomed anew; and now it's spring again. A year? 'Twill pass while here we talk of other matters. What says the clock upon the mantel now? So late it is! Shall we not rouse my slaves and make us ready for a start? The Gallows Hill is far from us, thank God! I do not want to fail poor Jasper, so he'd think that words with you were dearer than his life in my regard."

I rose. "You are right. From now until the time the money is recovered our thoughts should be of him, and of his danger."

"Rest here a while," she answered, "and I will see that all is made ready. Also I must wear more serviceable clothes to go on this adventure. A spade

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will be needed, and a bar perhaps. It were best that I go in the sedan, for in that you can convey the chest to Mr. Littleton's without exciting any suspicion on the road. Remain, and I will return in time."

It was close to the hour of one when we started: Clarantine in the chair, carried by the two blacks, and I at the side, with two primed pistols in case of need. Avoiding those ways which might lead to encounters with belated travelers, we made good progress to our destination; and shortly, — on the very spot where I had first seen Clarantine dismount from her carriage, — we halted, and leaving the servants there (for it was safer that they knew nothing of the wealth we came to seek), she and I started off through the sparse trees, bound for the grim gallows.

Once there, we turned about the foot of the posts the light from a lantern we had brought, and by its glow we saw plainly a place where the ground had been recently turned. Grasping a spade I found the earth was but loosely filled upon the chest; and in less than ten minutes of digging I had the oaken, iron-bound box uncovered to such an extent that there now could be no question of our victory.

Resting awhile after the first feverish effort, I again set to it; and shortly had a handle uncovered at one end, by which I made to drag it forth, and found my strength insufficient for the task. At first we considered calling upon the servants to assist, but dis-

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carded that idea as possibly unsafe. Finally I unearthed it fully, and discovered I might raise it now by putting forth every ounce of muscle.

This I did, and with the aid of the bar I worked it some distance from the spot where it had been buried, and eventually dragged it through the trees near where the chair was waiting. I then looked at my watch. Jasper had said I should reach Littleton's with the money at about two. The lantern showed my watch to point to only half after one. Should we best go forward, or wait! The journey to the house would be but fifteen minutes at the longest.

I asked Clarantine what she thought best to do. She hesitated, and then we both sat down to rest upon the money-box, and look across the City in the faint light of the night sky.

"It was here," said I, "that first we met— Clarantine."

"Yes," she said. "It was here."

"It was here," I said, "that your hair fell from its comb."

"Yes," she said again, but faintly.

"It was here," I said, "that first I kissed your hands, your throat, your hair— your lips so sweet, Clarantine."

I waited, but she did not answer me.

"It was here," I said, "I learned to love you so. Say that you think of me with kindness, dear! Say

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that before the year has gone you'll give the promise I must win from you? Oh, dearest love of moonlight and of spring! The mating time is here, when flowers bloom, and soft winds blow, while insects hum o' nights. The birds are nesting soon; the river near, free from its winter's icebound mountain fastness, swirls to its meeting with the sunlit sea. Too soon the frosts will come, Clarantine; the leaves will fall; and winter grasp the world. Shall we not love then, while we may? Think what can happen in a year of waiting. Hark! I hear a watch-cry in the Town. 'Tis time that we were starting. Yet, before we go, Clarantine, be kind? A whole year I must wait? To-night, when I was standing in the hall, you ran into my arms. I kissed you then! You did not seem offended."

"Is it then true that you kissed me to-night?" she asked.

"Do you not remember? A year's too long, Clarantine."

"A year?" she asked. "I'm sure it's more than that since last we kissed."

'Twas thus I got my answer on the hill.

Alas for love, we could not tarry now. Struggling with the chest as I might I brought it to the sedan chair. Lifting it within, and placing Clarantine at its side, we started away for the lawyer's home, and as the clock struck two in the steeple of the State House, we stood before his door.

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Assisting my love to alight, I reached for the money-box, and brought it forth in my arms. The steps leading to the entrance were steep, and it would have been best to bid the servants aid in lifting the gold, but so anxious was I to get it safely within, I guessed my strength as greater than it was; so, as the door swung open to my summons by Uncle Littleton's own hands, I stumbled, and let the oak box fall with a crash upon the walk. Whether it was unlocked, or whether the jar of the fall broke away the fastening, I do not know, but I do know that the heavy lid flew back and the chest itself overturned — disgorging on the roadway its fill of dirt and sand.

There was not so much as a penny in the casket we had brought!

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CHAPTER XXI

That Which Was Written in the Stars

FOR a moment I stood incredulous and horror-stricken at the worthless contents of the treasure-chest thus revealed; and then I was down on my knees beside the heap of sand, brushing it aside in the hope that I might still find among its grains that which we had hoped to recover.

Clarantine, no less appalled than I, was explaining as well as she could the situation to Mr. Littleton, who came at once to my side to make certain we had carried nothing but earth from the gallows' foot to aid in the saving of Jasper Dean. Together we spread the sand until it could conceal nothing of value, and then with dying hope, turned to examine the chest itself. The very absence of weight when I lifted it told me the story, and yet we made certain there was no secret compartment or double lid before we laid it by. Earth! Fresh-smelling sandy loam from the hill where the tree of death bears bitter bloom. Earth! And no more!

What should we do? To return to the prison empty-handed would be of no avail. To attempt the

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raising of such a sum in a month, much less an hour, would be an undertaking difficult of accomplishment. Suddenly I thought of Puncher! He, I remembered, was to meet me here with the key, and go back to the gaol at my side. Where was he? Littleton did not know. He had left the house shortly after my departure the night before, and if he had returned it was without the attention of any in the household.

I flew to his room. The door was locked, and I rapped feverishly upon the panels with noise enough to wake a dozen men, but there was no response. Miss Katz, upon the next landing, heard me, however, and dressed to inquire the difficulty. Servants, aroused by the very air of excitement, hurried into their clothes and down the stairs. None could give me news of the astrologer, except that he had left the house the night before.

I thought of the Sons of Liberty, and Littleton knowing the place of their meeting hurried about with one of the servants to find the rooms in Carpenter's alley locked and dark.

I, hesitating to leave for fear that Puncher might still return in time with some suggestion, and hesitating still to trust any other with so delicate a mission, despatched the two negroes and two of our most trusted servants, to the gallows to further search for any other hidden chest. Then through the house I

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walked, wringing my hands at my futility, and picturing Dean anxiously awaiting our arrival.

It was well toward three o'clock when Littleton returned with the information that the rooms of the Sons of Liberty were closed; and the half-after bell was near to striking when the men returned empty-handed from the hill. It would seem — as well I knew who had looked the ground over — that the sod and rank grass well proved no excavation had been made with the exception of that which we had readily found and explored. In this they had further searched, until they were certain nothing had ever been placed therein but the single casket we had unearthed.

Puncher! He seemed the only hope now! I went to his room again, while messengers were sent on a chance to nearby homes he frequented. Nothing was known of him — nothing! The last two servants who had been dispatched upon this errand returned together. I stood upon the steps of the house with the family about me, to learn of their report. And as they finished I noted that the sky was paling out toward the east. The day was waking — the dawn which spelled the long cold night for Dean! We stood, all silent, as the wind which comes with the rising sun swept with a whine and a chill about the house. And then from a clock in the nearby street a bell was tolled.

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One! Two! Three! Four!

Dull I stood, as one stricken. And Clarantine, who clung to my arm, broke into weeping at the clanging tocsin. Too late! I had failed! The death-watch then was set, and none could save him now — no, not the King! It was the horror I felt that Jasper had leaned on me, and I had somehow broken in the hour of trial. I had done as he had directed, and I was not to blame for the money being taken from the chest; and yet he would be wondering, and never know that I had done his bidding as truly as I might.

And with that thought I made a firm resolve. He would know! I would return and tell what had befallen. With a hasty word of my intention I handed my love into the care of Miss Katz, and prepared to depart. Mr. Littleton, however, arrested my going for a moment.

"Do you think it wise to return, Worrell? Will not you place yourself in the hands of Broadfoot again? We know, of course, where you are, but if you cannot save Jasper, it would be a pity to endanger yourself for an idea. Remember, this prison governor is without principle, and he will blame you for the loss of this gold."

"I do not think that there is any danger," I said. "And I must see Dean, and receive his assurance that he understands why I failed, and forgives me.

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Do not attempt to delay me, Uncle Littleton, for I have but little time to reach him. Even now it may be too late."

"Nay," said the lawyer, "he can still be spoken to, I think. God help him, but some hours must pass before they bring him forth. Had I not best accompany you? With two it will be safer."

I was about to reply, when a man came hurrying about the street corner, stepping out briskly in the dim light. Something told me that he was coming directly to us with news, and we all stood expectant while he eyed each intervening house on both sides of the street — evidently a stranger in the locality, bearing urgent information.

Shortly he spied our little group about the steps, and came directly over to make an inquiry.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I am looking for the house of Amos Littleton, the lawyer. Could you direct me to it?"

"This is the house, and I am Mr. Littleton," said our host, stepping forward. "What is it that you wish?"

"I am come from Mr. Joshua Puncher with a message," he responded. "He has but a few minutes since arrived at the home of Miss Dale —"

"My home!" cried Clarantine.

The man peered up into her face, then knuckled his forehead respectfully.

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"I didn't recognize you, Miss," he said. "I'm Joseph, the second hostler; waked from my bed to bring this message."

"The message!" said I, with agitation. "What says he?"

"He wishes Mr. Littleton and Mr. Sloan to meet him there at once."

With that the lawyer and I sped down the steps, but were halted by a cry from Miss Katz.

"Wait! May we not go with you? There will be no delay, as Clarantine's chair and bearers are at hand."

"Come, if you wish," said Littleton, "but Sloan and I will hurry on ahead."

And at the side of the hostler we two hastened away, leaving the burdened chair and its two sturdy bearers jogging at the rear.

But a short time later, then, we stood before the closed and locked portal of the library in Miss Dale's home, beneath the door of which there streamed a light.

"They're come, Mr. Puncher," cried the servant, while Littleton rapped firmly, and called upon the astrologer to open.

"One moment," he responded. And then, "Tell me, Amos, are you and Worrell alone?"

"Yes, for the moment. The servant has gone, but Miss Katz and Clarantine follow as rapidly as their

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bearers can bring them. Say, can we yet save Jasper Dean? "

"No," said Puncher after a pause, and I heard him sigh with the answer. "No, that cannot be. But let us hold what hope we may for the ladies when they come, for if his death may not be prevented, the blow to them can at least be softened with a hint of deferment, or — "

"Hist! They come," said Littleton. "May we not enter? "

"Surely! " cried Puncher. "Surely! "

At this, we being all gathered upon the landing, the astrologer threw open the door. We crowded forward.

The room was a rather large apartment, covered along the walls with rows of books. About were scattered chairs, a desk by the window, and in the center a great table. A candelabra stood upon the desk, one also on a chair at the table-side, and a third was held by Mr. Puncher himself, so as to cast a light upon that with which the large table was heaped and piled in shining mounds.

Gold!

So bright, so glistening, that in the candle-light it made you blink; in broken stacks and tiny fallen pyramids it lay. Some had dripped, like golden water, to the floor. Irregular in size and shape, of many countries' coinage; each piece held scores of dents and

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scratches on its surface which told of strange adventures and of sacrifice. Gold! Our gold! Wells' gold! The hidden treasure!!

My whole soul burst into one cry, "He's saved!" forgetful that the moment for this had passed. But Puncher nodded thoughtfully and echoed my words.

"Yes," he said. "He's saved. I knew that when I read this note last night. Sit down, I'll read it now to all of you."

Wondering, we closed the door, and took our places about the heavily-laden board. Standing with the light at his side, the reader of the future took from his coat a paper, and as he unfolded it made us a slight explanation.

"There is much that he wrote I will not read now. But what he says which bears upon this gold, and what is taking place to-day, I share with you. The letter runs in part like this:

DEAR OLD FRIEND PUNCHER:

Hark to me carefully, and read with a seeing eye, for this is the hour of my triumph — this is my day of days!

You thought that the money I got from Clan and Littleton was secured with the idea of misappropriation. You were right! I had no other idea when I used your name to obtain it. It was for me to spend in riotous nights, that I might press from me that reckoning which some day we all must face. There

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were others who aided in this, and would have aided as well in the spending — but they are few, and I was the guiding spirit.

When Johnny Wells stole the money from me, I felt no anger toward him. It meant to me a battle of wits, and I was certain that I could regain it, being far smarter than he. It was true I did all I could to save him. I knew if he had gone free I could have found the hidden moneys and enjoyed their use, while he still thought, possibly, that they were in the ground. To force him, under the fear of death, to tell where they were hid, seemed like an unfair game to me. And yet I thought, as did some others, that he would blurt the truth. But when he died rather than tell his secret — it was just that I could not understand.

To-day I sit upon his pallet in the cellroom where he sat, and with my elbows on the sill where he has rested I see the sky and trees he looked upon. He's gone — and yet his spirit rests beside me as I write; and with the tender fingers of the dead has touched my eyes and made my vision clear.

I see an open road before me — which he trod — a lane which leads to peace and to contentment. I see wherein I still can turn to honor and amendment, and make you yet regret me that I'm gone. We had a common cause, and I can aid it. We had a generous, kindly friend in Littleton, and to him I can restore his money, and perhaps some grain of faith in his analyses of men. We had a liking for the man who sits beside me as I write, and who will bring this letter to your hand. To him I can give freedom from this gaol, and lead him toward the wish of his heart. To-night I sent him to the woman I love. Her happiness is mine,

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now. The Ghost of Gallows Hill, I think, has wiped away my selfishness. Again they two will be upon the hill together ere the dawn is breaking. Mayhap as I stand there when high the sun is risen, the winds of heaven will tell me of their happiness. Mayhap, who knows, a nightingale will linger in the light to carol to me of a plighted troth.

Good friend, — for now I know you such to be, — go to the foot of the gallows as soon as you receive this letter, and with a spade dig at the foot of one of the posts until you have unearthed the money-chest which formerly belonged to the Sons of Liberty. Remove the money immediately, and refill the box with stones or earth to make it weighty. Rebury it, and return to Miss Dale's home. Say nothing of this to any, much less Worrell, for he thinks he will secure this gold to buy my liberty. Wait until four in the morning, or later if you think wise, and then — when the final death-watch is set, and there can be no hope of saving me, show him that it was so I meant these things to be."

Here Puncher paused in his reading, and laid the letter down.

"There is more," he said, "but I need not read it now. Let us all face the truth fearlessly — as fearlessly as Dean. I held not trust in him these later weeks — nor do I think did many. As Worrell said, he's saved. To me there seems to be no other course to take. Already it is light. The stars have faded out. He will fade with them. It is better so. I know

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these stars, these eyes which watch the world and you and me. If only I might read their every meaning, life would hold no problems. This, alas, I cannot do. But I have learned enough to know we should not mourn for him who dies to-day. His is but a single life. Before a half-score years are gone, many and many will rest as still as he, and for a cause this gold here represents. Liberty! 'Tis for this that it was given, 'tis for this these two have died. And for that cause again I'll lay it by, with your approval, until our Country calls. You, Worrell, ride away to Riverview as soon as you may go, and ask that we may stay a while at your father's hospitable home; for with this shadow on our house, it will be well if we can leave it for a little. Say, also, that you bring a bride along. Do not demur, Clarantine. For if you mean this marriage shall take place eventually, play not the shy coquette, lest events of world-wide magnitude may snatch your happiness from you ere 'tis ever consummated. Your parents know of how the matter stands, Worrell, and look with favor on the match you've made. Thus, if it is this day you think to wed, their blessings will be with you. This I know."

"Is it right to speak and plan for happiness at such an hour?" asked Clarantine.

"Jasper did," replied Mr. Puncher. "He looked to this very thing from his prison window. Come! His sacrifice comes early in our cause, and early in his life.

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There will be many more to follow — so many that the count will scarce be kept."

"Must Worrell go?" she asked.

"Surely you would not tear from him this glorious heritage?" he cried. "Why, I myself may live to see the dawn; and Littleton, with powder horn on hip and bullet-pouch, will trail his gun through many a hard campaign."

"Who — I?" said the lawyer; "I, Puncher?"

"Old friend, your best of days are yet to dawn."

"But I am doubtful of this new religion — this sudden thrusting down of age-old idols. These men in leather breeches taking law into their unaccustomed hands. I cannot read what it may bring us to."

Old Puncher smiled. "Yet still do you believe," he said, "because you have the heart and eye to see that when young Wells and men like Jasper Dean lay down their lives that this new cause may prosper, — those whom we thought were so unfit to rule will lead us by their humble sacrifice. The time was when we thought that to command, a body must be vested in the purple. A Man of Galilee once tried to show our error, and yet our lesson has been poorly learned. For us, I think, the days of kings are numbered. You may not think so now, and try to temporize, and press from you that reckoning which some day we all must face. So be it! There is time to ponder and to study. But when the call does come — and come it will for all of

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us, I think, — you will be there, to stand for what is right! "

" Perhaps I may decide to morally support some measure," said the lawyer, " but surely I will not bear arms again? Puncher, think of my age! My fighting days are done. I'm well by fifty now."

" In Connecticut the leader of the Sons of Liberty is a fighting man. To-day he drills his troops, and drills himself, that he may take the field when duty calls. He's past his fiftieth year as well as you. But what old Putnam does you, too, can do."

" But, Joshua — "

" Enough," said Puncher. " It will be! I read it in the stars! "

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CHAPTER XXII

The Ghost Is Laid

UP through the morning mist I rode, turning my horse's head toward my home; up through the streets of the Town, but now awakening to their daily stir; up through the quiet lanes, which soon would echo with the hum of busy lives. Try as I might to tune my heart to solemn strains, rather it seemed to beat in rhythm with the song of thrushes whirling overhead.

At my side, upon a dappled steed, there rode my love. For she had set this very day to marry me, so that we should not part, not even for an hour. Thus, here were we — wedded in the hush of dawn by a kind-faced, aged vicar; while Mistress Katz stood by and wept, and Uncle Littleton gave my bride to me with a smile — while Mr. Puncher, prince of all astrologers, flourished his snuff and swore the stars betokened both of us unending happiness.

Although it was a day of tragedy upon the Gallows Hill, my heart was beating high. Yet, how could it else? It was the month of May! The May of love, and of desire; and the soft winds blew and the warm

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sun shone as only the wind can blow and the sun can shine in May — upon a golden honeymoon. All nature seemed to smile upon us. Birds sang, blossoms budded, brooks trilled over silvery stones beside the way. Jolly farmers gave us kindly greetings, and red-coated King's men saluted our approach. Trades-fellows bade us the time of day, and pretty country wenches eyed us, smiling boldly, as though the color in my lady's cheek and my proud bearing as we rode, told them as plain as words could speak that wedding-bells were jingling in our hearts.

Now, in the thought of the great happiness which lay before me, I turned our horses after a time from the beaten track; and when we neared the outskirts of the City, made through the woods which lie toward Frankfordtown. Here all was calm and still — a new delight, where I might place my arm about my darling as we rode; or with our horses shoulder against shoulder, could reach her cheek, her hair, her pouting lips. All about us was the whisper of new blooms, stimulated by the glow of the morning as it pierced the fragile canopy of budding branches — as warm and tender as the glance of my love seen through her tumbled curls. Here the sun was gilding a knoll of russet leaves — now withered; there touching a fairy ring to vivid green; stopping to coax a modest flower by the wayside, and draw the fragrance from a bank of ferns. How wonderful it was! How fair! Could

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there be sorrow on a morn like this? Could any suffer, and the day so bright? Ah, ill-starred Jasper, now is your atonement!

As on we rode the trees grew ever more dense, and the houses which had dotted the distant roadside with a touch of red and gray now were but seldom seen. Yet timed to the season of earth's awakening, there rang forth the music of a sledge and anvil, far enough aside from where we strayed to chime like a bell against the harmony of Spring. And if its clangor sang to us of love, it tolled a variant note to some, that day of portent.

So, as we finally turned our backs upon the highway which had led us from the Town — whose roofs and spires we could scarcely see among the waving trees — a chilling wind, blighting the sunlit day with man-made misery, blew to my ears a din and roar, which — like a pounding surf heard on a distant shore — told the commotion of a jostling throng.

As I drew rein to hark, it was my love who spoke.

"Hear you the smith at work?" she asked. "His hammer sounds just like a bell upon the air. He would not work so, and poor Jasper dying, think you? Perhaps the Governor has saved him after all."

"Perhaps," I said, and listened to the gathering tumult.

"You know what Uncle Littleton said this very morn; that perhaps a miracle would save him from his

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fate. And Puncher, too, bade me not to sorrow; because he thought that Dean's life might yet be spared."

"I heard his words," I said, "and prayed they might be true. And, too, the forge is ringing clearly yet."

"But not so clearly as a moment since. There seems to be a muttering in the air. Recall you how the astrologer said that if Dean died, his name, like that of Johnny Wells, should be upon the roll of those who gave their lives for Freedom's cause?"

"Just so," I said. "The hammer now has ceased."

"Nay! There it sounds again. I take it as an omen — all is well. But, faint it is. There seems to sound a roaring in my ears. Do people shout? Perhaps they cheer within the Town because they've learned that Jasper will not hang. They lead them forth before the day is scarce begun, I've heard. Surely, if he were not already saved, it would be over now — we would have heard!"

"See, in the north where gather all the storms, the clouds are parting, and the sky peers through. Our path lies up the river to my home. What we could do, we did to save this man. This muttering — like the stir of distant thunder — may be a Summer rain-cloud left behind. To linger here will do no good to any. Let us put by this portion of the past — and build with faith and confidence and future hope a

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barrier of love so high and strong that sorrow for 'what might have been' is locked forever out."

I kissed her then; and with her hand in mine, we turned again toward the shining river. Just once she raised her hand, and bade me hark. The hammer of the smith still sang afar.

And yet I heard the roaring of the distant sea. Then from the river's mist arose a vision. In my mind's eye I saw the rumbling cart; the shouting fearsome throng; the blue-clad executioner. I saw the figure on the dismal chariot — handsome, inspired, clear eyes unafraid!

Perhaps he sees a vision of us here, and yet he seems to gaze toward the City from which he has been led. His eager glances sweep the bright green fields, the trees which cluster by the tinkling brook. He smiles upon the sun, now risen high — and at a bird which flutters through the air. And now I see a form there by his side. A faint and shadowy form which holds his hand — and guides him in the path which he has trod.

Oh, stooped and shabby Ghost of Gallows Hill! Point him the spot where you had hid his gold. Show him that all his plans are bearing fruit; the treasure saved; his name washed clean of stain. Show him the men who judged him rash and wild, furthering the cause for which he dies to-day, until it rides upon the crest of Victory! And when his tide of life has

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truly ebbed, oh! faithful spirit of a faithful cause, stand you to greet him on the unknown shore.

My vision fades, — but onward at my side, bound by our love, and promise of the stars, with fingers softly twined, one vision stays. May thus we journey through the years to come.

My Clarantine!

The End.

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